

## RI Legislative Update September 2014

With the RI General Assembly in Recess and with Governor Chafee sitting in a “lame duck” position there has not been a lot of activity on the legislative front – at least in terms of policy. There has, however, been a good deal of activity in the just concluded party primaries particularly for state office positions.

The race for governor was hotly contested by both parties, with Gina Raimondo and Alan Fung emerging as their party’s winners. They will face off with Moderate Party candidate Robert Healy. Both Fung and Raimondo are basing their platforms on job creation and making the state more accommodating for small business to enter and to grow. How much either candidate can actually get done remains to be seen, as the position of governor is structured to be weaker than most other states and relies on the governor being able to get things accomplished working with the General Assembly. The past two governors have had trouble in this regard. With all of their similar positions it will be important to see how they differentiate themselves during the next two months and see which one has a more realistic plan as to how to accomplish their goals.

A couple of other interesting points of this campaign season include the number of candidates that have run unopposed, and the failure of established (and previously successful) political candidates to come out of the primaries. To the first point on the local level nearly all of the leadership in the State Senate and House ran unopposed. For about one half of these candidates they will also run unopposed or with no significant party representative facing them. That makes a statement about the RI political culture as although many of these candidates have proven to be viable leaders the overall economic situation of the state has been poor. Without opposition the public does not get to hear how these incumbents plan on fixing these problems as their current methods and policies have not made an impact (for the most part).

The other interesting aspect of this election year is that established political heavies such as Ralph Mollis and Frank Caprio were not successful in moving to other political offices. It would seem to suggest that if other viable candidates would run for office that voters would be open to change and support them. In fact, most voting districts in the state showed an increase in the number of voters that came out this year vs. the past few primaries. This would imply that the electorate is engaged and desperately wants to hear how (and when) these politicians will be able to get the state back on track.