

2024 -- H 8195

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LC005982
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

JOINT RESOLUTION

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$150,000 TO THE RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE CORPORATION FOR THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY VISITORS CENTER

Introduced By: Representatives Messier, Fellela, Alzate, Stewart, and Cruz

Date Introduced: April 24, 2024

Referred To: House Finance

1 WHEREAS, Visitors' centers, also commonly known as visitor information centers, or
2 tourist information centers, are buildings that serve as a source of information for tourists or new
3 residents that enter a state or a region of a state, and a showcase for the state/region; and

4 WHEREAS, Visitors' centers in cities can either be owned and operated by the state, a
5 municipality, a local Chamber of Commerce, a tourism council, or be a joint effort between a city
6 or cities and a Chamber of Commerce to support and publicize a well-known tourist district, city,
7 or region; and

8 WHEREAS, Visitor centers help increase travel and tourism statewide; and

9 WHEREAS, An example of the extraordinary positive impact visitor centers and the
10 organizations that manage visitor centers have on the quality of life for residents and visitors is
11 illustrated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Since 1985, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has been at the
14 forefront of sustainable destination development, place making, community building and
15 resiliency, and education; and

16 WHEREAS, The Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that serves Rhode Island's ten (10)
17 Blackstone River Valley communities. It has a governing Board of Directors and is not
18 membership based. It serves the three hundred ten thousand (310,000) residents of Rhode Island's
19 Blackstone Valley; and

1 WHEREAS, The Council is an environmental educator and operates the Blackstone
2 Valley Explorer, a forty (40) passenger Riverboat that takes students of all ages on the river and
3 has just opened the River Science Center at new offices located at 1420 Broad Street at Central
4 Falls Landing. The Council also produces the Dragon Boat Races held in Pawtucket, the Polar
5 Express Train Ride from the Depot in Woonsocket, manages the Blackstone Valley Visitor
6 Center in Pawtucket for over twenty-five (25) years, plus it works with the municipalities and
7 state agencies to improve the quality of life for our residents; and

8 WHEREAS, BVTC efforts also include promotion of local businesses which serve as
9 destinations, marketing for the local food and drink industry to the region, and spurring and
10 facilitating activation of the Blackstone River through seasonal events, river boat tours, the
11 Taiwanese Dragon Boat Festival, and other major initiatives; and

12 WHEREAS, The Council was the first destination in the world to receive the United
13 Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Ulysses Prize that merits distinction for
14 innovative contributions to tourism policy, tourism sustainable planning, environment protection
15 and new technologies. In 2006, the Council achieved the UNWTO'S best Certification in tourism
16 governance. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2008, recognized the
17 Blackstone Valley Tourism Council with their Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Award, the
18 most prestigious sustainable tourism development award in the world. In their comments, the
19 WTTC noted the Council's integrated, community-centered, resilient approach to tourism
20 development and community building; and

21 WHEREAS, BVTC has three (3) locations throughout Northern Rhode Island
22 (Woonsocket, Central Falls and Pawtucket). In addition, BVTC's Pawtucket location is directly
23 adjacent to the Old Slater Mill-National Historic Park Site run by the National Park Service
24 (NPS). The Pawtucket Visitor's Center serves as the unofficial, unfunded visitor's center for both
25 the NPS and the John Chafee National Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor that runs from
26 Pawtucket to the State's border in Woonsocket; and

27 WHEREAS, The impact of reinvestment in the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center is
28 important for Pawtucket's growth. With the coming together of the stated community
29 development elements, the results will bring about the cohesion needed for the City to grow; and

30 WHEREAS, The Blackstone Valley Visitor Center has three (3) entrances: one facing
31 City Hall, one facing the National Park and one facing Main Street. These strategic openings
32 allow for people to access the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center for business. Because the
33 Blackstone Valley Visitor Center is active, it has attracted the Rhode Island Football Club as a
34 tenant and the Globaltise digital/video production corporation as tenants. The Blackstone Valley

1 Visitor Center's staff directs residents and visitors to find the local shops, restaurants, and services
2 to increase revenues locally and state-wide; now, therefore be it

3 RESOLVED, That there is hereby appropriated, out of any money in the treasury not
4 otherwise appropriated for the fiscal year 2024-2025, the sum of one hundred fifty thousand
5 dollars (\$150,000) to the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation to distribute to the Blackstone
6 Valley Visitors Center for the express purpose of providing base level operation funds; and the
7 state controller is hereby authorized and directed to draw his orders upon the general treasurer for
8 the payment of said sum, or so much thereof as may be from time to time required, upon receipt
9 of properly authenticated vouchers.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
JOINT RESOLUTION
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION OF \$150,000 TO THE RHODE ISLAND COMMERCE
CORPORATION FOR THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY VISITORS CENTER

- 1 This resolution would authorize the appropriation of the sum of \$150,000 to the Rhode
- 2 Island Commerce Corporation for the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center.

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