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RHODE ISLAND STATE AGENCY RESEARCH

Those of you researching a particular Rhode Island state agency to locate its regulations, decisions, forms, publications or contact information for personnel have access to various resources available from the Law Library. There are print materials, online databases (LexisNexis, Loislaw, and Westlaw), and agency-sponsored websites.

The major print materials are the *Code of Rhode Island Rules*, the *Rhode Island Government Register*, and the *Rhode Island Government Owner's Manual*.

The *Code of Rhode Island Rules* (LexisNexis, KFR35 .A24) is a multi-volume comprehensive compilation of the rules and regulations of the various state agencies in Rhode Island, organized by issuing agency. The *Code* contains an index providing access by subject and by rule number.

The *Rhode Island Government Register* (LexisNexis, KFR36 .R48), a monthly publication, contains notices of public hearings on proposed rulemaking, temporary emergency rules, and a current list of Rhode Island rules. The *Register* does not serve as a source of newly promulgated rules or regulations. An annual, cumulative index is published as part of the December issue.

The *Rhode Government Owner's Manual* (Reference, KFR421 .A152 R46 1992 -), an annual publication of the Secretary of State's Office of Public Information, is very useful for obtaining general information about the individual agency and contact information for its personnel. An online version is also available from the website of the Secretary of State at http://www.sec.state.ri.us/resources_for/pubinfo/rigom05/rigom05.html.

Most state agencies have websites. The contents of these agencies' websites vary. Some websites have current and/or proposed rules, notices of upcoming meetings, forms, agency decisions, and contact information for personnel. For an alphabetical listing of links to state agency websites, use the website of the Rhode Island Office of the Secretary of State at www.sec.state.ri.us or the RI.gov website at www.ri.gov.

Another useful website maintained by the Office of the Secretary of State is the Rules and Regulations Database Search at www.sec.state.ri.us/rules. After selecting an agency, there are options to search by keywords. There is an option to include "repeals and repealed rules," "superseded rules," and/or "expired rules" in the search results. Other features at this site include tips for

searching, text of the Rhode Island Administrative Procedures statute, and a listing of agency rules coordinators. One needs to create a free account to track agency rules and regulations.

Publications of the state agencies are collected and distributed to depository libraries (public and academic libraries) by the State Publications Clearinghouse. There are eleven full and fourteen selective state depository libraries. Each depository library is required to maintain and make available to the general public state publications produced in the last five years. The State Library, State Archives, Providence Public Library and the University of Rhode Island each retain all state documents permanently. These publications can be searched using the online catalog of HELIN (Higher Education Library Network) and the public libraries online catalog. The State Publications Clearinghouse also issues the *Checklist of Rhode Island State Documents*. The *Checklist* is a guide to the information published by the state agencies and it is produced quarterly with an annual cumulation. Annual cumulations of the *Checklist* dating back to 1996 are available at www.sec.state.ri.us/library/clearinghouse/clearinghouse/checklist. Where available, there is a link to the agency's website

for the full-text of the publication.

Loislaw.com, an alternative to LexisNexis and Westlaw for primary and secondary legal materials, offers access to Rhode Island regulations in addition to the regulations of the other forty-nine states. While enrolled as a student in the law school, you have free access to their databases for law school students at **loislawschool.com**. You must sign up for individual access. In order to do so, contact a reference librarian for the law school's access code. On **Loislawschool.com**, there are options to browse Rhode Island's regulations or to conduct a keyword search of them. By clicking on the "Currency" link, one can find out how current the database is.

There are several databases on Westlaw and LexisNexis for researching Rhode Island state agencies' materials. In addition to the Westlaw databases for tracking proposed and current regulations, there are materials in the areas of employment, environment, insurance, public utilities, securities, and taxation. Path on Westlaw to access these databases is **Directory> U.S. States Materials> Rhode Island> Administrative and Executive Materials**. The path on LexisNexis to access regulation tracking and materials for public utilities, securities and taxation is **Legal> States Legal - U.S.> Rhode Island> Agency and Administrative Materials**.

To search for agency materials of another state, use the USA.gov (formerly First.gov) web page containing a link to the official state government website for each of the fifty states. The address is **www.usa.gov/Agencies/State_and Territories.shtml**.



Rhode Island State Boards and Commissions Research

You might have an occasion to need information on members, notices of meetings or meeting minutes of a particular board or commission. The Office of the Secretary of State's website is also an excellent resource for researching this type of information. Click on the Public Information tab at www.sec.state.ri.us to access the web page of the Public Information Division of the Office of the Secretary of State. The Public Information Division is the entity that accepts the many filings required to be made with the Secretary of State. Select the Boards and Commissions Information link to access the Boards and Commissions database which contains an alphabetical listing of active boards and commissions. This database lists the names of members on the board or commission, their post, engagement (when they took the oath to uphold state and federal laws), date when term expires, and how/by whom appointed. There is an option to search the database. A Glossary and a F.A.Q. are provided.

Listed below the Boards and Commissions Information link is the Open Meetings link. Clicking the Open Meetings link will bring you to a listing of items such as the text of the Open Meetings statute, the rules and regulations pertaining to the Open Meetings statute as adopted by the Secretary of the State, an Open Meetings F.A.Q., and the eTown Crier. The eTown Crier is a

searchable database of notices and agendas for public meetings (required to be filed electronically) and meeting minutes for public bodies (required to be filed electronically). One can browse an alphabetical listing of or conduct a search of public bodies required to file electronically pursuant to the Open Meetings statute.



New Legal Search Engine!

Cornell Law Library recently announced a new legal search engine at library.lawschool.cornell.edu/guides/researchengine.asp. The specialized research engine helps users easily find authoritative online legal research guides on every subject. It searches approximately twenty different websites that either prolifically publish guides, or index and link to guides. The number of websites searched was kept small to keep search results manageable and focused.

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