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Law Library Blog (September 2020): Legal Beagle's Blog Archive

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September 2020 Library Blogs

Legal Beagle's Post

September 4, 2020

Finding Rhode Island Legislative Information Online

September 4, 2020



The Rhode Island legislature is officially the General Assembly. It consists of the Rhode Island House of Representatives and the Rhode Island Senate. The [General Assembly website](#) is a treasure trove of information about the legislature and about our state.

Sometimes when doing research on a state or federal law you are asked to complete a legislative history. One version of completing a legislative history is compiling all the documents related to a specific law that preceded its enactment. For information about creating a legislative history of federal laws, there are two great websites that can guide you through the process. One is the Law Librarians' Society of Washington, DC's [Federal Legislative History Research: A Practitioner's Guide to Compiling the Documents and Sifting for Legislative Intent](#). Another is the Law Library of Congress' [website](#).

The process of compiling the legislative history of a Rhode Island law is both harder and easier in some ways than for Federal legislation. The process is easier because there are far fewer pieces of information available to compile. Unfortunately, as a researcher it is sometimes harder to glean intent with fewer available sources of information. For basic information about compiling a legislative history in Rhode Island, our [Rhode Island Research Lawguide](#) is a great place to start.

In Rhode Island, the text of [proposed bills](#) can be found online starting in 1997. The [text of Public Laws, Acts and Resolves](#) can also be found online going back to 1994. To locate this material before the 1990's contact us at [Ask a Librarian](#) and we can help you determine what might be available and where it might be found. For example, HeinOnline and the Rhode Island state law libraries can be sources for locating some useful historical material!

Another helpful resource online is [this glossary](#) of legislative terms. It is a great research companion to this [webpage on how a bill becomes a law](#) in Rhode Island.

The most exciting place to learn about the legislative process and what legislators considered when enacting (or not enacting as the case may be) a new law, is [Capitol TV](#). [Capitol TV is the](#) “television production department of the Rhode Island General Assembly. All sessions of the House of Representatives and the Senate are televised using the Rhode Island Cable Television Statewide Interconnect System. Also televised are all hearings of the House Finance Committee, selected hearings held by other legislative committees, as well as various press conferences and other special events held in the State House.” At least some of the videos remain online and able to be reviewed using the Capitol TV On Demand feature. They can be somber, humorous, fascinating, and insightful!

More information about legislative (or executive or judicial) information in Rhode Island, contact the librarians at [Ask a Librarian](#).

September 11, 2020

Meet the Law Library Staff! - Mike Muehe

September 11, 2020



This year the Legal Beagle is featuring blog posts which introduce you (or re-introduce you) to our hard-working and amazing staff. This week meet Mike Muehe, which rhymes with “me”. He is a 2016 graduate of our law school and an amazing new librarian.

Legal Beagle: What is your title?

Mike: Research & Access Services Librarian

Legal Beagle: Can you explain to our readers what you do using non-librarian terms?

Mike: My role is primarily to help students and faculty access materials they need through research and reference help, navigating print resources and digital databases, or obtaining materials from other libraries. You can usually find me behind the circulation desk or in the library stacks.

Legal Beagle: What is your favorite book?

Mike: I like a lot of books across topics (esp. history, LGBTQ2+, dystopian fiction), but one of my favorites would have to be [Moby-Dick](#). Having a maritime background, this book is near and dear to me.

Legal Beagle: What is your favorite part of your job?

Mike: I love working in research and I love that every day is like a new scavenger hunt for information. I'm constantly learning new things every day while still putting my legal studies to use. As I am only about a year into this new profession, I also love that I get to work with the librarians who taught me while I was a law student; their wealth of knowledge, guidance, and mentorship is truly empowering.

Legal Beagle: What is your favorite meme?

Mike: While I'm much more a fan of gifs, I'm a sucker for punnery and huskies, so the meme of the husky and its stuffed animal delivering bad puns is my favorite.

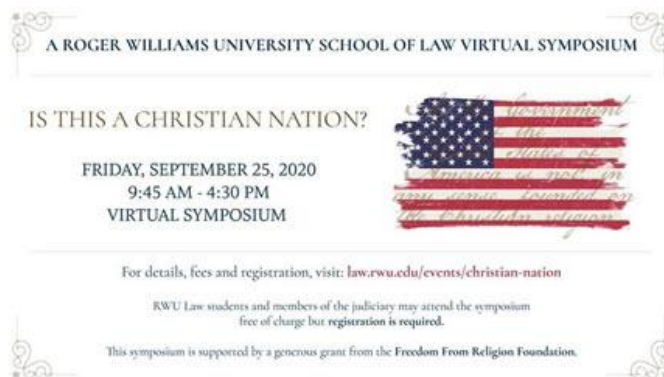


Legal Beagle: Name something you dislike, but everyone else seems to love.
Mike: Twitter. I've tried multiple times and it just never sticks with me.

September 18, 2020

Is This a Christian Nation: Symposium Book Display

September 18, 2020



On September 25th, the RWU Law Review, supported by a grant from the Freedom From Religion Foundation, is holding a one day symposium to allow scholars to discuss the Establishment Clause and whether the United States is a Christian nation. This question is particularly well-suited to an event at our school because our namesake, Roger Williams, “[is best known for founding the state of Rhode Island and advocating separation of church and state in Colonial America.](#)”

This symposium features scholars from Oxford, the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies at Monticello, University of Pennsylvania, Willamette University, Boston University, the University of Chicago, University of California at Berkeley, and RWU Law. RWU Law students and members of the judiciary may attend the symposium for no charge but registration is required. To register, [go to this link](#).

In order to further shine light on this topic, the Law Library has created a [digital book display](#) on the separation of church and state. It also includes some basic information on Roger Williams and the [Roger Williams National Memorial in Providence](#).

September 24,2020

Voting is fundamental!

September 24, 2020



Whether voting is [a right or a privilege](#) is subject to debate. What is not open to debate is that voting is fundamental to democracy.

Some of our most important legal documents in the United States are about voting. According [to USA.gov](#), “U.S. election laws date back to Article 1 of the Constitution. This gave states the responsibility of overseeing federal elections. Many Constitutional amendments and federal laws to protect voting rights have been passed since then.” Another important legal document, the [1965 Voting Rights Act](#), states, “no voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.” This year we are also celebrating the centennial of women's’ suffrage. The [19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution states](#), “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

This year voting may be a bit different because of COVID. [Many states](#) have developed protocols for voting to allow people access to voting in different and safer ways this year. For example, a recent [SCOTUS case involved new procedures in Rhode Island](#).

Here at RWU Law we have been working on a non-partisan effort to make information more available for students. We will be featuring information about registering and voting on social media and on the big screens in the law school. We have also [created a guide](#) in collaboration with several SBA student group leaders. It provides information about voting in Rhode Island and beyond our state. Our intention is to provide non-partisan information to encourage our community to be active in the democratic process by voting. This guide also provides information on how to volunteer to be a poll worker.

Voting is essential for democracy and it is fundamental for members of any political party. We invite you to not only make yourself aware of voting laws, but also to participate in our political process by voting.