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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## PRESS RELEASE

### EPI Announces Speakers at Its 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Policy and Budget Conference, Set for Sept. 29

**PROVIDENCE, RI:** The Economic Progress Institute (EPI) has announced the speakers for its 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Policy and Budget Conference, which is set for Sept. 29 at the Crowne Plaza. Taking the theme “We the People: The Rhode Forward,” the event calls on Rhode Islanders to come together at a critical moment in our state’s and nation’s history to safeguard democracy and advance equity. The program will feature national thought leaders, local champions for justice, and powerful performances.

“At a time when democracy and equity are under threat, this conference is about Rhode Islanders coming together to chart a better future,” **said EPI Executive Director Weayonnoh Nelson- Davies.** “ We’re proud to convene leaders, advocates, and community voices who are determined to move the Rhode Forward.”

The keynote speaker is **Davante Lewis**, who serves as Public Service Commissioner for Louisiana’s 3<sup>rd</sup> District, representing over one million residents from Baton Rouge to New Orleans and across the River Parishes. Davante is the youngest person ever elected to the Public Service Commission in Louisiana, the first Black openly LGBTQ+ person elected to any office in the state, and the first LGBTQ+ individual to hold a statewide position in Louisiana’s history. He was one of the plaintiffs in a landmark court case that successfully challenged Louisiana’s racially gerrymandered congressional map, resulting in the creation of two majority-Black congressional districts. After his speech, Nelson-Davies will engage Davante in a Q-and-A session.

**The Economic Progress Institute, 600 Mount Pleasant Ave., Bldg. 9, Providence, RI 02908**

All Rhode Islanders can get behind a vision of shared prosperity. Visit [www.economicprogressri.org](http://www.economicprogressri.org)



**EPI's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Policy & Budget Conference**

**We the People  
The Rhode Forward**

**BUY TICKETS!**

**Sept. 29, 2025  
8:00-11:30 AM  
Crowne Plaza**

**FEATURING**

**Keynote Speaker Davante Lewis**  
Louisiana's youngest-ever Public Service Commissioner & the state's first openly LGBTQ+ elected official, leading on climate justice & economic fairness

**Master of Ceremonies**  
Ralph Tavares Jr.  
Senior VP of People & Culture, DSC Global

**Special Guest**  
The Honorable Gregg Amore  
RI Secretary of State

**Weayonnoh Nelson-Davies**  
Executive Director  
Economic Progress Institute

**Special Guest**  
The Honorable Joseph Shekarchi  
Speaker of the RI House of Representatives

**Dwayne Keys**  
Chairperson  
EPI Board of Directors

[www.economicprogressri.org](http://www.economicprogressri.org)

**The Economic Progress Institute**

**K. Joseph Shekarchi, Speaker of the RI House of Representatives**, is one of two local leaders who will speak. Speaker Shekarchi will talk about the challenges of enacting state budgets aimed at addressing big problems at a time of shrinking federal support. A former longtime high school history and civics teacher, **Rhode Island Secretary of State Gregg Amore** will give a speech titled "Democracy Led by the People for the People."

**EPI Director of Research and Fiscal Policy Alan Krinsky** and **EPI Policy Director Nina Harrison** will present research and data in a presentation called "We the People: The Rhode Forward to Tax Justice." RI youths **Eugenie Rose Belony** and **Max Beattie** will lead a special "We See You" ceremony recognizing everyday Rhode Islanders who are strengthening our democracy and mapping a more equitable future.

**The Raging Grannies of RI** will open the event with a singing performance and renowned gospel singer **Nyisha Conry Siliya** will give a closing performance.

Resource tables from community partners — including the **ACLU of RI**, **Common Cause RI**, the **Freedom to Read Coalition**, and **the Secretary of State's Office** — also will be available.

## DETAILS

**WHO:** Louisiana Public Service Commissioner Davante Lewis, RI House of Representatives Speaker Joseph Shekarchi, Secretary of State Gregg Amore, and more

**WHAT:** EPI's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Policy & Budget Conference

**WHEN:** Monday, Sept. 29, 8-11:30 AM

**WHERE:** The Crowne Plaza, Grand Ballroom, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick RI

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*EPI envisions and fights for a Rhode Island where concrete and consistent investments are made in people. A state where we all have healthcare when we're sick, a safe place to live, childcare that doesn't break the bank, nutritious food to eat, and access to opportunity regardless of race, gender, disability, age, or zip code. To learn more about us, visit [www.economicprogressri.org](http://www.economicprogressri.org).*



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