

## INVESTING IN INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES: Income and Other Supports

The following three icons highlight some of the many issues addressed in the budget and legislative session. Absence of an icon generally indicates that work needs to be done on the issue or that the item simply provides information.

 One of the legislative priorities identified by EPI prior to this year's session.

 Significant progress.

 Mixed bag—some, yet inadequate, progress.

 **RI Works:** For the first time in 30 years there will be an increase to the monthly benefit for families participating in the Rhode Island Works program, the states 'welfare' program funded through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant. The benefit will increase by 30%—raising the monthly benefit for a family of 3, for example, from \$554 to \$721. In addition to the benefit increase, the yearly \$100 clothing allowance is extended to infants and toddlers and to children living in RI Works families who receive SSI benefits. When a parent starts a job, they can exclude earnings for 6 months (up to 185% FPL or if the parent reaches the time limit). Also, 18-year-olds can remain on RI Works so long as they are in high school or pursuing their GED. The EPI-led Raising RI Coalition, which championed these changes, sought a higher benefit increase—to lift families out of deep poverty—and indexing the benefit to inflation. It also proposed allowing parents to attend post-secondary education for 2 years.

**Payday Lending:** Legislation to cap or eliminate pay day loans did not move forward. While laws in most states in the Northeast require pay day loans to be capped at 36%, Rhode Island allows these loans with an effective ARP of 261%.

**Food Assistance:** The budget doubles the general revenue allocation for the Rhode Island Community Food Bank from \$175,000 to \$350,000. The Food Bank is expected to receive close to \$1.3 million in additional federal relief funds to provide food aid.