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What Question 7 means to RI's 21st Century Economy - by Steven King

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Quonset Business Park is the leading engine of economic development and job creation in Rhode Island due in large part to the support from our partners across local, state and federal governments. Quonset has been a Rhode Island success story, turning \$700 million in public investment into over \$2 billion in private investment across the Business Park. Today, Quonset is home to over 12,000 jobs at more than 200 companies.

In a special election scheduled for March 2, 2021, Rhode Island voters will have an exciting opportunity to support critical investments to build on this success. A “Yes” vote on Question 7 is a vote for job creation and economic development activity, under the proven leadership and administration of the Quonset Development Corp.

In support of this measure, the R.I. Ports Coalition, a Rhode Island non-profit advocacy group, has launched a campaign to advocate for voter approval. The R.I. Ports Coalition was excited to “kick off” the campaign with a 30-second commercial that aired just before kickoff of last Sunday’s Super Bowl. The Coalition also has a robust digital marketing campaign planned across many platforms. You can watch the Super Bowl commercial, [here](#).

Question 7 will allocate \$60 million to two targeted investments:

1. A \$20 million investment in Quonset’s Port of Davisville.

This investment will contribute to the financing of the Port Master Plan. The Plan includes rehabilitation of Pier One (built in 1941), construction of a new Pier at Terminal 5 and dredging. This expansion will allow Davisville to service offshore wind project cargo and create new jobs, while maintaining existing businesses, including one of North America’s top 10 auto importers.

The Port of Davisville is an economic crown jewel of Rhode Island, generating an annual output of \$374.3 million, supporting nearly 1,700 jobs and producing \$98.9 million in household earnings for

Rhode Island families, according to an economic impact study conducted in 2020. The port also generates \$45.5 million in total state tax revenue, including \$10.5 million in local taxes. A “Yes” vote on Question 7 is a vote for continued economic growth at the Port and for Rhode Island families.

2. A \$40 million investment in statewide Industrial Site Development.

This investment would replicate Quonset’s successful “Site Readiness” initiative throughout Rhode Island. Site Readiness was a crucial element of Quonset’s expansion to a business park with more than 12,000 jobs at over 200 companies. Administered by QDC, funds would facilitate the statewide preparation of business-ready parcels for manufacturing and other job-creating activities. These funds would support permitting, engineering, site preparation and construction, among other activities.

Quonset Business Park has only 94.6 acres of available land left. A “Yes” vote on Question 7 will position Rhode Island to prepare additional sites to generate economic development and job creation statewide.

The pandemic has changed how we vote - there are three ways for Rhode Islanders to vote in this special election.

1. Vote by mail - The Secretary of State’s office recommends that voters mail their ballots at least one week prior to the March 2 election. There will also be mail ballot drop-off sites in every city and town in Rhode Island. For more information visit www.sos.ri.gov.

2. Vote Early - Each Rhode Island city and town will offer an early voting option. Please call your city or town hall during normal business hours to learn more about this process.

3. Vote in-person on Election Day - There will be 57 poll locations throughout Rhode Island, with at least one in every city or town. Polls close at 8:00 PM so make sure to make a plan to vote ahead of time.

Now more than ever, we need additional investment to create opportunities for hard-working Rhode Islanders. Question 7 will replicate the job producing success of Quonset Business Park, prepare our state for offshore wind jobs and help expand existing port businesses. To learn more, please visit the Port’s Coalition website at www.Quonset7.com or follow them on Twitter @Ports_Coalition or at www.Facebook.com/riportscoalition.

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