

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

H.7957 / S.2196: Cryptographic Key Protection Act

An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government — Digital Asset Keys

Rhode Island Bitcoin Policy Initiative | June 2026

House sponsor	Representative Stephen M. Casey
Senate sponsors	Sens. DiPalma, Gu, Burke, Urso, Paolino, Zurier
Status (Jun 6, 2026)	H.7957: held for further study (Mar 5, 2026); S.2196: held for further study (Apr 7, 2026)
Builds on	2025 Session H.5868 / S.0375
Model	Wyoming HB0086 (2023): Senate 31–0; House 41–13
Key feature	Prohibits compelled disclosure of private cryptographic keys

What this bill does

H.7957 and S.2196 prohibit Rhode Island courts, agencies, and other governmental bodies from compelling individuals to disclose their private cryptographic keys in legal proceedings related to digital assets or digital identities. A narrow exception permits compelled disclosure only when no public key, address, or alternative mechanism is available to obtain the necessary information. The bill preserves all existing court authority to compel production of the assets themselves; it restricts the means, not the end.

Fiscal impact at a glance

Metric	Estimate
One-time implementation cost	\$15,000 – \$35,000
Annual ongoing cost	Negligible (absorbed by existing operations)
Direct revenue impact	None
Impact as % of general revenue	Less than 0.001%
New agencies or programs required	None

Key provisions

- **Core protection.** Courts and agencies may not compel disclosure of private cryptographic keys related to a digital asset or digital identity.

- **Narrow exception.** Compelled disclosure permitted only when no public key, address, or alternative mechanism is available.
- **Court authority preserved.** Existing authority to compel production of the assets themselves is unaffected.
- **Recognition.** Private keys are established as sensitive personal property deserving of legal protection.

Why RIBPI strongly supports this

A private cryptographic key is not the password to one account; it is a master credential to every asset, identity, and right secured by that key. Forcing disclosure of a private key when a public key suffices is analogous to demanding a deed when a court only needs a mailing address. Wyoming's 2023 law (HB0086) passed the Senate 31–0 and the House 41–13 and has been operating without measurable fiscal cost since. The Fifth Amendment provides some federal baseline protection against compelled disclosure in criminal contexts, but state-level legislation is necessary to extend comparable protection to civil proceedings and administrative actions.

Recommendation

RIBPI recommends passage in both chambers. Committee chairs in House Innovation, Internet & Technology and Senate AI & Emerging Technology should consider scheduling additional hearings or expedited markup before the session's anticipated sine die adjournment in late June.

The full Fiscal Impact Analysis (13 pages) is available at ribpi.com/research, with detailed methodology, comparative state analysis, and sources.

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End of Report