



CITY OF WOONSOCKET
BOARD OF CANVASSERS AND REGISTRATION
169 MAIN ST P.O. BOX B
WOONSOCKET, RI 02895

March 25th , 2024

Honorable Chair of the House State Government and Elections
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for **H-7662** Disaffiliation

Dear Chairman Shanley and Members of the House State Government and Elections Committee:

I am writing today in my capacity as manager of the Board of Canvassers in Woonsocket in support of **H-7662**. From what I have seen, every body that oversees election administration in the state - Rhode Island Town and City Clerks Association, the State Board of Elections and the RI Department of State - has expressed their support in updating **RIGL 17-9.1-23 Party Designation**.

One of the most common questions voters ask me is why unaffiliated voters become affiliated with a party after selecting the candidate of their choice. Why doesn't their preferred status "unaffiliated" stick with them? And my answer is always the same – that's just the law. I often follow with, "but there's a bill in the General Assembly right now to change that". And I often pique their interest with that.

I have come to learn that many voters see value in registering as unaffiliated, as it allows them to select from either side of the aisle depending on the race and the pool of candidates. In fact, almost half of the registered voters in Rhode Island are unaffiliated. For such a common preference among voters, it surprises me that to this day, unaffiliated voters who participate in party primaries have to remember to disaffiliate after casting their ballot in order to return to their preferred status. The onus is on the voter to sort this out for themselves.

And while changing your party is more accessible than ever and can be done from home or from your local city hall, the requirement for individuals to request a party disaffiliation after every primary election is repetitive and it does not service anyone. For that reason, I urge your support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Giana Savastano
Manager of the Woonsocket Board of Canvassers