



CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support of House Bill 7664

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

As Election Administrator for the City of Newport and on behalf of Chairwoman Sharon Connors and the Newport Canvassing Authority, I am writing to strongly encourage you to **support** passage of House Bill 7664, which was introduced on behalf of the Secretary of State and has unanimous support from the RI Town & City Clerks Association. This bill addresses a number of updates to election administration that would help both voters, candidates and election officials.

First, it would move the date of the statewide primary from eight Tuesdays before the general election to the last Tuesday in August, effectively a week earlier most years. This is a proactive move because Rhode Island's current date leaves a very short window between the primary and a federally required date to produce and mail general election ballots to military and overseas voters 45 days before the general election. Currently, if we had a recount or another issue that delays final certification of the primary, we would miss that federally required deadline and would open Rhode Island up to a lawsuit from the Justice Department, who would force us to make this change.

Second, this bill would move deadlines tied in law to the primary and general election dates to account for changing the date of the primary and provide more time for the collection and validation of signatures on nomination papers. Signature collection is a challenging process for both veteran and new candidates to qualify for the ballot and increasing the window for them to do this would allow more candidates to successfully qualify for the ballot and take some of the pressure off the local boards of canvassers to during the busy election cycle.

Third, H-7664 outlines a process for local board of canvassers to report suspicious signatures on nomination papers to the State Board of Elections and for them to alert other local boards. Additionally, this bill would require the state board to promulgate rules and regulations for challenges to nomination papers and establishes a timeline in law for decisions on challenges. We strongly believe that these updates to election law, particularly the change in the primary date, will improve the electoral process in Rhode Island and strengthen our system for nominating candidates.

The Newport Canvassing Authority urges you to support passage of House Bill 7664 and thanks you for your consideration.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,



Hugh Moren
Election Administrator



Sharon Connors
Chair, Newport Canvassing Authority

CC: Sharon Connors
J. Clement "Bud" Cicilline
Donato D'Andrea
Mary Moriz