



**RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE  
OF CITIES AND TOWNS**

*Distinctive Communities  
Powerful Alliance*

March 26, 2024

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley  
State Government and Elections Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith St. Providence RI, 02903

RE: Bill Number: **7756/7849/7662/7664/7474** RELATING TO ELECTIONS --

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

We are writing to express our support for the proposed legislation of House Bill(s) **7756, 7849, 7662, 7664, and 7474**, which aim to enact essential updates to our election process. As an organization we believe these measures are crucial for ensuring the integrity and accessibility of our electoral system. We are pleased to join with The Secretary of State, Rhode Island Board of Elections, and our affiliate member, the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association (RITCCA), in advocating for these important reforms. Together, we recognize the urgent need for modernization and improvement in our electoral procedures to better serve the needs of our citizens and uphold the democratic values upon which our nation was founded.

**7756-** Local boards of canvassers should have the authority to process these applications, given that there is still over two weeks for the Secretary of State to send the requested ballot, providing ample time for the voter to receive and return it. While the 21-day deadline mandated by law has its rationale, there should be a reasonable window for accepting applications. A similar five-day window already exists in state law for transmitting and receiving voter registration forms beyond the 30-day deadline. It is unnecessary for election officials to reject mail ballot applications based on such a minor technicality that does not impact operations.

**7849-** The proposed amendment clarifies state law regarding the opening of mail ballot drop boxes at city and town halls and other designated locations. Instead of opening these drop boxes 20 days before Election Day, they may now be opened 35 days prior. Before the Let RI Vote Act of 2022, local election offices typically opened drop boxes more than 30 days before the election. This adjustment aligns with the timeline for various election-related activities, including the mailing of ballots by the Secretary of State, which usually occurs more than 20 days before Election Day, as well as deadlines for mail ballot applications and voter registrations.

**7662-** The proposed amendment allows non-affiliated party voters to participate in party primaries without necessitating affiliation with a specific party. In our state, 45% of voters identify as unaffiliated/independent. Currently, these voters are compelled to affiliate with a party to vote in primaries, disenfranchising those who prefer to remain unaffiliated. This requirement often goes unnoticed, leading to inadvertent party affiliation. The amendment seeks to address this issue, ensuring that unaffiliated voters can participate in primaries without compromising their independent status, thereby fostering greater civic engagement.

**7664-** The proposed legislation empowers the Board of Elections to promptly assess suspected forgery and update local canvassing authorities accordingly. Additionally, Moving the primary election date to the last week of August will help ensure compliance with federal law regarding mail ballots for military and overseas voters. This adjustment would allow for more thorough review and adjudication of challenges throughout the primary election process.

**7474-** Currently, Rhode Island's Constitution and state law mandate that voter registration must occur at least 30 days prior to an election, the longest timeframe among all states. To introduce Same-Day Voter Registration, the first necessary step is to amend the State Constitution to eliminate this 30-day restriction. Subsequently, the General Assembly would establish the procedures for implementing same-day registration. Enabling same-day voter registration until Election Day would promote greater participation and representation in the electoral process.

On behalf of the League of Cities and Towns thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express our views.

Sincerely,

David M. Bodah, Associate Director

Cc: State Government and Elections Committee Members  
Ernie Almonte, Executive Director, RILCT