



Canvassing Authority

Town of Portsmouth

2200 East Main Road
Portsmouth, Rhode Island 02871

Sent via email

March 11, 2025

(401) 683-3157

The Honorable Representative Evan P. Shanley
Chair, House State Government and Elections Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: Portsmouth Board of Canvassers Support for 2025 H5311 - An Act Relating to Elections –
Mail Ballots**

Allows the Board of Elections to tabulate mail ballots in local special elections in the same manner as in statewide elections.

Dear Chairman Shanley and Committee Members,

We are writing in support of House Bill 5311.

The Rhode Island Board of Elections is charged with tabulating mail ballots for statewide elections and special elections for state officers. They have the equipment and expertise to conduct this task efficiently and expeditiously. Unfortunately, this is not the case for local special elections.

Pursuant to RIGL 17-20-26, mail ballots for special elections are tabulated by the local boards of canvassers. This is burdensome for us as the number of mail ballots has increased since 2020. The mail ballots are already received and certified by the Board of Elections but then must be packaged and picked up by a representative of the local boards for tabulating in slower precinct scanners. This complex tabulation process is inefficient, less secure, and delays election results.

H5311 would amend RIGL 17-20-26 to give the Board of Elections the authority to maintain secure custody of the mail ballots for local special elections and count them through their high-speed tabulators in the same manner it already does for statewide elections.

We respectfully encourage you to consider passage of H5311.
Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline S. Schulz

Registrar of Voters

For the Portsmouth Board of Canvassers

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee
The Honorable Representative Evan P. Shanley
Steven Sepe, Committee Clerk
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House