

Kirk McDonough
Chairperson

Nicholas J. Lima
Registrar / Director of Elections



Quilcia I. Moronta
Member

VACANT
Member

CRANSTON BOARD OF CANVASSERS
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March 15, 2025

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

RE: Cranston Board of Canvassers Support for H-5312 (Local Canvassing Board Appointments)

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

I am writing on behalf of the Cranston Board of Canvassers to request the support of the House for **H-5312**, an act that would clarify and update several problematic gray areas in how local boards of canvassers are appointed, while adding critical election security and continuity of operations procedures and best practices. This election security bill is supported by the Cranston Board of Canvassers, RI Town and City Clerks' Association Elections Committee, RI Board of Elections, and the RI League of Cities and Towns.

H-5312 closes a number of loopholes that have caused documented delays and competing legal interpretations in how local boards of canvassers are appointed in numerous towns by clarifying the law to match existing best practices. This includes defining what constitutes a "failure" of a local party chair to submit a list by adding a 30-day "ticking clock," and applying the same standard to the mayor or council president to submit a nomination for a vacancy to the city or town council. Which municipal leader is entitled to the nomination is also clarified. These procedures will ensure critical board seats do not remain vacant for months, affecting continuity of operations.

As an additional election security provision, and for statewide consistency in local board operations, the bill also clarifies that fixed board terms should expire on a staggered basis, only in a non-election year on the first Monday of March, which was the original intent of the General Assembly when it created local boards of canvassers via various public laws enacted in the 1920s, to ensure terms aren't rotating out in the middle of an active election. It requires alternates to be appointed, and, using a cybersecurity best practice, establishes clear lines of communication, emergency contacts, and designates the Chief Local Election Official in each office who is authorized to request the Secretary of State add or remove user access for the Central Voter Registration System.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions on this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 401-780-3128, or via email at nlima@cranstonri.gov. We appreciate your support.

Very truly yours,

Nicholas J. Lima
Registrar / Director of Elections

Cc: Kirk McDonough, Chairperson, Cranston Board of Canvassers