



**RHODE ISLAND LEAGUE
OF CITIES AND TOWNS**

*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

March 18, 2025

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

RE: HOUSE BILL H-5381 – RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- NOMINATION OF PARTY AND INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

Chair Shanley and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I am writing to express our support for House Bill 5381, which seeks to amend several statutes related to elections, including the timing of primaries and the dates for filing nomination papers and objecting to them.

We are fully aligned with the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association, the Rhode Island Board of Elections, and the Secretary of State in recognizing the urgent need for change in our state's election calendar. As you are aware, Rhode Island's current September primary date is dangerously close to the federal deadline for complying with the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). While nearly every state in the country has moved their primary to an earlier date to ensure compliance, Rhode Island has not yet done so, putting us at risk of failing to meet this deadline and potentially facing legal action from the U.S. Department of Justice.

The current timing of the primary election leaves insufficient time to complete critical post-primary processes, including recounts, risk-limiting audits, and certification of results. Additionally, the late primary creates substantial challenges for election administrators, who are left with little time to prepare ballots for the November election. This includes the complex process of designing, proofing, and printing ballots, which must be rushed in order to meet tight deadlines. This hurried process significantly increases the risk of errors that could compromise the integrity of the election.

Another key issue is the turnaround time for voting equipment. After the primary, it takes several weeks to pick up, clean, reprogram, and re-certify the voting machines, ballot boxes, and accessible ballot-marking devices. This equipment must be ready for early voting in mid-October, which leaves little time for the necessary work to be done. Moreover, election administrators are under tremendous pressure to meet tight deadlines for the delivery of voting equipment to polling places, which increases the likelihood of mistakes.

The September primary also causes significant strain on local election officials, who must process a backlog of voter registrations and handle other time-sensitive tasks such as proofing ballots, recruiting poll workers, and preparing election materials. With only a few weeks to accomplish all of these complex tasks, local boards are often forced to work long hours and weekends to catch up, further stretching resources and contributing to stress.

An additional week to spread out these tasks would make a significant difference in the efficiency and accuracy of our election process. By moving the primary date forward, we will provide local election officials with the time and flexibility they need to properly manage the election process and ensure that our elections run smoothly and fairly.

The Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns strongly believes that House Bill 5381 is a critical step toward improving our election process and ensuring that Rhode Island remains in compliance with federal law. We respectfully ask your support of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House State Government and Elections Committee

One State Street, Suite 502 | Providence, RI 02908 | P 401.272.3434 | F 401.421.0824 | www.rileague.org