



RHODE ISLAND WORKING FAMILIES POWER

Rep. Evan Shanley, Chair

House State Government & Elections

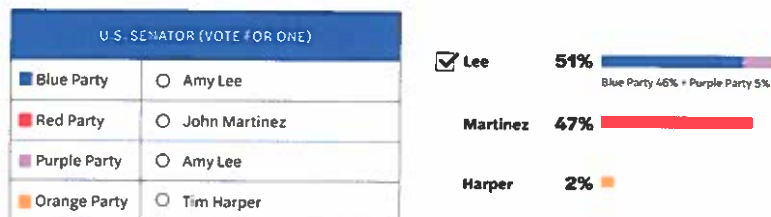
March 25, 2025

Support for H5712, Relating to the Rhode Island Fusion Voting Act

Chair Shanley and Members of the Committee,

RI Working Families Power strongly supports the Rhode Island Fusion Voting Act. Fusion voting would allow candidates to appear on multiple party lines with all votes counting toward their total, giving voters the freedom to vote their values while still supporting viable candidates who can win elections. This nonpartisan reform would strengthen our democratic process by expanding meaningful choices for all Rhode Island voters, regardless of their political affiliation.

FUSION VOTING, EXPLAINED



NYS Sample Ballot							
Office	Democratic A	Republican B	Conservative C	Working Families D	Green E	Libertarian F	Independence G
Presidential Electors For President And Vice President (Vote for one)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Electors for Joseph R. Biden For President Kamala D. Harris For Vice President	Electors for Donald J. Trump For President Michael R. Pence For Vice President	Electors for Donald J. Trump For President Michael R. Pence For Vice President	Electors for Joseph R. Biden For President Kamala D. Harris For Vice President	Electors for Howie Hawkins For President Angela Nicole Walker For Vice President	Electors for Jo Jorgensen For President Jeremy Cohen For Vice President	Electors for Brock Pierce For President Kerla Ballard For Vice President

In 2024's annual Gallup polling, 58% of respondents nationally asserted that a third party is needed. When asked specifically, "Do the Republican and Democratic parties do such a poor job that a third

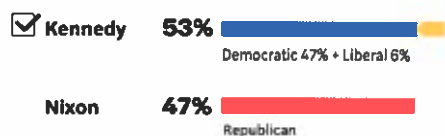
major party is needed?” 69% of Independents, 53% of Democrats, and 48% of Republicans agreed.¹ Yet casting a vote for a 3rd party candidate under our current structure is difficult for two reasons:

1. It is prohibitively difficult for a new party to be established in Rhode Island.
2. Third-party candidates under our current structure usually act as spoilers, rather than having a real chance at winning.

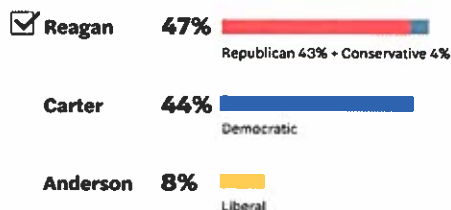
The current ‘winner take all’ electoral system forces voters into a false choice between voting their conscience (party-wise) and voting strategically (person-wise). Fusion voting resolves this dilemma by allowing multiple *parties* to endorse individual candidates who commit to their voters’ priorities. This creates greater accountability as elected officials must be responsive to the specific constituencies that helped elect them. Additionally, the bill’s reduction of the party qualification threshold from 5% to 1% will ensure more diverse political voices can participate meaningfully in our democratic process.

We know that fusion voting can serve as one answer, and perhaps the best answer, to the ongoing conundrum of disengagement and hyperpolarization in our politics, particularly among working-class communities whose interests are often overlooked or not spoken to—regardless of their ideological leanings. In New York, both the Working Families Party *and* the Conservative Party have used the fusion ballot to better communicate voters’ preferences. Fusion voting has even had an important impact at the Presidential level throughout American history. Consider the following results in New York state in the 1960 and 1980 presidential elections²:

1960: In a razor-thin national election, the winner of New York’s 45 electoral votes would win the presidency. Although Richard Nixon received more Republican votes than John F. Kennedy received Democratic votes, Kennedy’s 6% support on the Liberal Party line delivered him the state and the White House.



1980: Ronald Reagan secured 43% of the vote on the Republican line, but his 4% Conservative Party vote pushed him over Jimmy Carter’s 44% Democratic support. (Independent John Anderson earned 8% on the Liberal Party line.)



¹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/651278/>

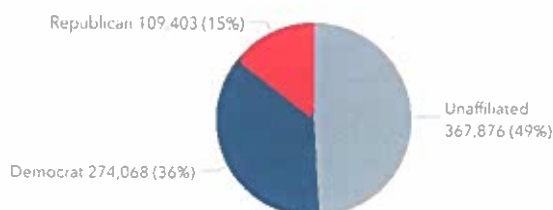
² <https://protectdemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Fusion-Voting-and-a-Revitalized-Role-for-Minor-Parties-in-Presidential-Elections.pdf>

We believe this is the first year fusion voting has come before this committee. It's important we get this bill right. Working Families Power is at the ready to be a partner in refining and passing this important, non-partisan, democracy-expanding reform.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Zachary Mezera

RI Working Families Power



Name	District	Democrats	Republicans	Unaffiliateds	Total Active
Rep. Shanley	HD24	3706 (30%)	1977 (16%)	6504 (53%)	12,187
Rep. Messier	HD62	4001 (46%)	940 (11%)	3848 (44%)	8789
Rep. Corvese	HD55	5043 (45%)	1300 (11%)	4971 (44%)	11,314
Rep. Ajello	HD01	3686 (65%)	234 (4%)	1735 (31%)	5655
Rep. Baginski	HD17	2884 (28%)	1700 (17%)	5636 (55%)	10,220
Rep. Brien	HD49	2906 (35%)	1253 (15%)	4094 (50%)	8253
Rep. Dawson	HD65	4698 (41%)	1397 (12%)	5274 (46%)	11,369
Rep. Kazarian	HD63	4719 (44%)	1223 (11%)	4713 (44%)	10,655
Rep. Kennedy	HD38	2665 (25%)	2275 (21%)	5919 (55%)	10,859
Rep. Knight	HD67	4064 (37%)	1425 (13%)	5419 (50%)	10,908
Rep. McGaw	HD71	3666 (32%)	1994 (17%)	5790 (51%)	11,450
Rep. Newberry	HD48	2594 (24%)	2294 (21%)	6116 (56%)	11,004
Rep. Paplauskas	HD15	2719 (23%)	2175 (19%)	6805 (58%)	11,699
Rep. Stewart	HD59	4565 (55%)	529 (6%)	3222 (39%)	8316
Rep. Tanzi	HD34	3928 (35%)	1553 (14%)	5628 (51%)	11,109