

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley  
House State Government and Elections Committee

RE: Support - H-5515

Dear Chairman Shanley,

I am writing to express my strong support of H-5515, to allow Rhode Island voters to decide whether or not to remove the archaic 30-day advance registration requirement. The opportunity for us to amend our State's Constitution to expand voting rights is fundamental to our democracy.

As you know, due to the constitutional restriction, Rhode Islanders are not permitted to register on election day to vote for state officials. However, they can register the same day to vote in presidential elections.

I can testify directly as to the significance of this matter. On November 5, 2024, as a part of a project of Common Cause, I interviewed voters exiting the Amica Center, the location for same-day registration in Providence.

Unregistered voters who went to their district polling places were redirected to the Amica Center. Several people we interviewed had gone through that extra effort, including one who needed to transfer buses and walk several blocks.

One voter had been unable to register 30 days in advance because he had moved from out-of-state and just recently closed on his house. Another had tried to vote early at his local polling place, but was told he had to wait for election day because he wasn't registered 30 days in advance.

Asked why it was important to vote, and how they would feel if they hadn't been able to do so, comments included: "I would have been upset." "I would have felt like I'm not doing my part." "Would have had a great deal of guilt." "I really wanted to exercise my right to vote."

I urge the House State Government and Elections Committee to pass H-5515.

Sincerely,

Kate McGovern  
Providence, RI