



BARRINGTON
RHODE ISLAND

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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: Support for H-5515 (Voter Registration Deadline Amendment)

Dear Chairman, Shanley and Hon. Members of the House State Government and Elections Committee:

I am writing to request the support for H-5515, an act that would provide flexibility to the General Assembly to modify the 30-day voter registration deadline by removing it from the state Constitution. This bill is supported by a vote of both the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association and the Rhode Island Board of Elections, and by the Secretary of State, among other organizations.

Rhode Island has the longest voter registration deadline in the country, which disenfranchises many voters each election cycle. Rhode Island already has same day registration for presidential election, as it is required by federal law. H-5515's removal of the 30-day deadline from the Constitution will allow the General Assembly to discuss a more equitable deadline for voters to register that will improve election administration and preserve the right to vote for all Rhode Islanders.

As it stands, hundreds of provisional ballots around the state are disqualified each year because residents have moved within 30 days of an election, and while they notified their local canvassers, the voter rolls are frozen by the existing provision – meaning local boards cannot process those changes if received within 30 days. Accordingly, local boards must reject many provisional ballots for otherwise eligible voters who failed to file their registration by the deadline, even though the reality is many have been legally residing in the district for months or more. The 30-day freeze means local boards cannot process registrations, which creates a backlog. By the time a primary or election is over, in Barrington alone, we have 100's of registrations queued up to be processed, adding a significant burden for our staff, especially in the short period between a primary and general. This is why the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association unanimously supports this legislation, which asks voters to consider repealing the 30-day deadline, presently the longest deadline of any state in the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill. If you have any questions on this legislation, please contact Nick Lima, Elections Committee Chair for the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association at 401-780-3128, or via email at nlima@cranstonri.gov.

Very truly yours,

Meredith J. DeSisto, CMC
Barrington Town Clerk

Cc: Nick Lima, Elections Committee Chair for RI'CCA