



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, *Secretary of State*

March 18, 2025

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

RE: In support of HJR5515 (Alzate) Joint Resolution to Approve and Publish and Submit to the Electors a Proposition of Amendment of the Constitution – of Suffrage  
H5381 (Speakman) An Act Relating to Elections – Nomination of Party and Independent Candidates  
H5872 (Baginski) An Act Relating to Elections – Deceptive and Fraudulent Synthetic Media in Election Communications  
H5514 (Furtado) An Act Relating to Elections – Mail Ballots  
H6092 (Voas) An Act Relating to Elections – Nomination of Party and Independent Candidates

Dear Chair Shanley,

I write this letter in support of the legislative package introduced at the request of the Department of State, which aims to increase civic participation, improve election administrative processes, and uphold the integrity and security of our elections.

**House Joint Resolution 5155 (Alzate)** would remove the 30-day voter registration requirement from the State Constitution upon a voter referendum.

Currently, the Rhode Island Constitution restricts voters to registering at least 30 days before an election - a requirement that creates an unnecessary barrier for otherwise eligible voters.

This legislation, dependent upon what voters choose during the General Election in 2026, would only remove the constitutional requirement of a 30-day voter registration period; therefore, this resolution allows the General Assembly to update State law to shorten the voter registration period or, if it chooses, institute same-day registration. This will allow policymakers in future legislative cycles to determine the appropriate safeguards and implementation that best fit our election processes.

For some voters, the process would be very similar to what they have already experienced, as federal law permits us to allow same-day registration for the President and Vice President. During the 2024 election, 9,187 people used this method of registering and voting. Additionally, for implementation purposes, requiring proof of residency and photo identification may prove to be potential safeguards to manage same-day registration easily.

**House Bill 5381 (Speakman)** would move Rhode Island's primary election day a week earlier to ensure the State complies with federal law on sending mail ballots to our military and overseas voters. The bill also adjusts other administrative dates and deadlines to accommodate this change.

This legislation will benefit voters, election officials, and, specifically, our military and overseas personnel. The Department of State has an obligation to comply with the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, which requires that we send mail ballots to military and overseas voters at least 45 days before an election. With our current primary date, we can barely meet this mail ballot requirement for the general election, and Rhode Island certainly would be unable to comply with the MOVE Act should a drawn-out recount or election challenge occur. Passing this legislation will help avoid potential litigation with the U.S. Department of Justice on behalf of the U.S. Department of Defense for non-compliance with the MOVE Act and will ensure our military and overseas personnel remain enfranchised in the most crucial part of the democratic process – voting.

Additionally, moving the primary date would grant more time for election officials to test voting equipment and prepare general election ballots. The availability of voting by mail and early voting ensures voters who may be traveling during the earlier primary can still participate in the democratic process at a time convenient to them. The Department of State is prepared to ensure the public is aware of this change in 2026, should this legislation pass.

**House Bill 5872 (Baginski)** sets parameters and guidelines on the use of synthetic media in election communications.

Over the last few years, artificial intelligence technology has advanced quickly, making it difficult to determine the validity and authenticity of what is being communicated or portrayed in different media. Artificial intelligence tools have the capacity to create synthetic media, which refers to the alteration of an image, audio, or video misconstruing an individual's appearance, speech, or conduct. The improper use of these tools is leading to misinformation and erroneous representations convincingly imitating candidates, elected leaders, and other public figures - otherwise known as "deepfakes."

The advent and popularity of deepfakes and similar content pose challenges to the functioning of elections and democracy because such communications can deprive the public of the accurate information it needs to make informed decisions in elections. Across the country, deepfakes have been used to deceive the public about statements and actions taken by political leaders, which is especially dangerous in the lead-up to an election when there is insufficient time for campaigns to debunk these mistruths before voters head to the polls.

The proposed legislation will prohibit a person, corporation, or political action committee from using synthetic media within ninety days of any election unless the media includes a disclosure. It creates a private right of action for candidates affected by synthetic media when the disclosure requirement is violated. This legislation ensures the balance between preventing misinformation and protecting the First Amendment, with allowances for Constitutionally-protected speech like press coverage, satire, and parody.

**House Bill 5514 (Furtado)** would remove the requirement for "Mail Voter" to be printed at the top of early voting ballots. Early voting ballots are treated the same as mail ballots because of how they are designated under State law, which is why the word "Mail Voter" is at the top of these ballots. This means that our office must print two virtually identical ballot styles that correspond to early voting and Election Day instead of one ballot style that can be used for both, preventing elections administrators from using these ballots interchangeably.

For this reason, thousands of early voting and Election Day ballots are discarded every election cycle. If this legislation was adopted, we would save upwards of \$100,000 per election cycle in ballot printing costs. In every election cycle, we must guess how many early voting ballots and election ballots to order since turnout is difficult to predict. We aim to ensure we never run out of ballots during the early voting period or on Election Day.

The removal of "Mail Voter" would allow local boards to use early voting ballots - which are the same as Election Day ballots - at polling places on Election Day if the need arises. We believe this bill is a minor technical change that will not impact voters or candidates but will help our office streamline our ballot printing process - which will help the State save money and improve government efficiency.

**House Bill 6092 (Voas)** would allow voters to electronically sign nomination papers online through the Department of State's website for all candidates in a voter's district.

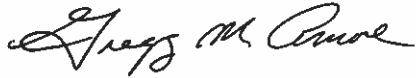
With the success of online voter registration and the online mail ballot application system, it is clear that voters are more steadily inclined to use online tools, and we believe we can implement the nomination papers process in the same fashion. We envision the online portal would function similarly to the online mail ballot application, where voters would have to log in to their voter record by providing their first name, last name, date of birth, and zip code and input their driver's license number to validate their identity. The online portal would serve as a complementary tool, as candidates would still be able to use the current paper-based nomination paper system.

Ultimately, with this bill, voters will be more informed of the candidates they are eligible to vote for; candidates will have more opportunities to qualify to get on the ballot; and the integrity of the process for candidates to get on the ballot will improve as the portal will help prevent fraud and minimize the chance for human error.

Overall, I urge this Committee and the full House to support the Department of State's legislative package, as these initiatives will encourage further discussions on how we can improve the administration of our elections, remove barriers to civic participation, and ensure we protect the integrity and authenticity of our elections.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, at [marias@sos.ri.gov](mailto:marias@sos.ri.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gregg M. Amore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gregg" being the most prominent.

Gregg M. Amore  
Secretary of State

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections  
The Honorable Karen Alzate  
The Honorable June Speakman  
The Honorable Jenni Furtado  
The Honorable Jacquelyn Baginski  
The Honorable Brandon Voas

# Is it ever “too late” to be civically engaged?

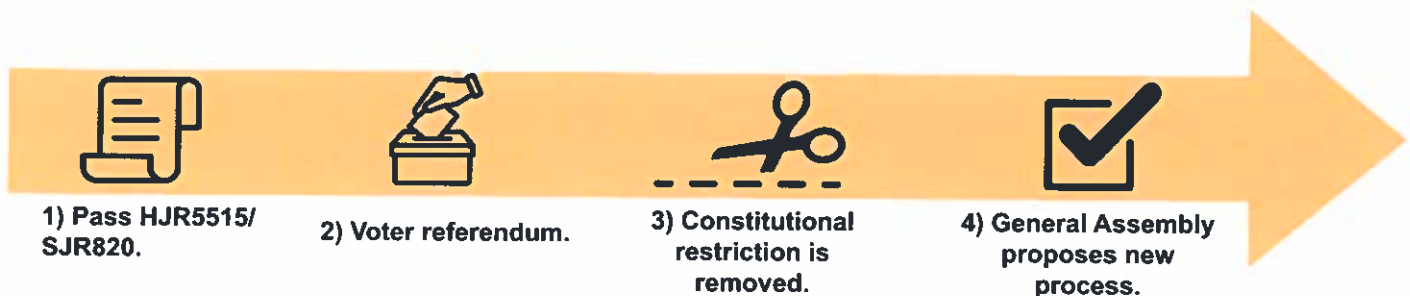
Rhode Island has one of the **most restrictive** voter registration deadlines in the country – one of only nine states that requires voter registration at least 30 days in advance of the election.

**This restriction is set in the Rhode Island Constitution.**

***How can we ensure all eligible Rhode Islanders have enough time to register to vote?***

HJR5515 (Alzate) / SJR820 (DiMario) would put a ballot question to voters, asking them if the 30-day voter registration requirement should be eliminated from the Rhode Island Constitution.

In a future legislative session, the General Assembly could then revise State law, allowing more time for Rhode Islanders to register to vote before an election, including same-day voter registration. Until then, voter registration processes remain unchanged.



***Who is disenfranchised by Rhode Island's restrictive voter registration period?***

- Recently naturalized U.S. citizens
- Registered Rhode Islanders who move between cities or towns
- Eligible Rhode Islanders who simply missed an arbitrary deadline\*

*\*In 2024, 2,311 people registered after the deadline and did not vote in the general election.*

***How do we know Rhode Island is ready for a later voter registration deadline, or even same-day voter registration?***

**We're already doing it.** In 2024, 9,187 people registered and voted on Election Day (but only for president and vice president, which Rhode Island is permitted to offer under federal law). Rhode Island has the elections infrastructure in place to support same-day voter registration.

**Eliminating one of the most restrictive voter registration periods in the country will enfranchise eligible voters and ensure all Rhode Islanders can make their voices heard.**

