



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF ELECTIONS

2000 Plainfield Pike, Suite A, Cranston, RI 02921
phone: 401-222-2345 | fax: 401-222-3135 | web: www.elections.ri.gov

January 21, 2026

The Honorable Representative Evan P. Shanley
Chair, House State Government and Elections Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H7007 – An Act Relating to Elections – Mail Ballots

Honorable Chairman Shanley and Members of the Committee,

This correspondence is in response to a request by members of the Committee for additional information regarding the electronic return of ballots from military/overseas and disabled voters via the secure online portal, as proposed to be made permanent under **H7007**.

The secure portal utilized by the Department of State and the Board of Elections represents a significant enhancement in security for the electronic return of ballots, which previously consisted of return by facsimile or email. While the secure portal system is procured by the Secretary of State and used by that office for the *electronic delivery* of ballots to voters, the Board of Elections has a direct role in accessing the *electronic return* of the ballot from the voter. Below is a summary of the security features within the system and Board procedures that protect the contents, and the privacy of ballots submitted through the secure portal.

Secure Identity Verification

Before accessing a ballot, voters must authenticate their identity through the secure and encrypted portal. The RI Department of State's Election Division issues each voter a unique Personal Identification Number (PIN) to verify their identity along with other personal information.

- All data is protected by SSL/TLS encryption, the highest standard for secure data transfer.
- The voter is only granted access to their specific ballot based on information verified against official voter registration records.

Protecting the Voter's Selections

The system is designed to securely separate the voter's identity from their marked ballot.

- Ballot marking occurs on the client-side within the voter's browser. The system does not collect or store the voter's specific candidate selections.
- For electronic returns, ballots are stored using *AWS Object Lock*, a technology that ensures that once a ballot is submitted, it cannot be changed, deleted, or altered.



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- The digital submission mimics the traditional "double envelope" system, where the voter's identity is used only to verify eligibility before the ballot is separated and processed anonymously.

Physical Paper Record

The system is only a ballot delivery and marking tool. It does not tabulate votes.

- Every ballot cast results in a physical paper ballot being printed by an election official using a Ballot-on-Demand printer within the secure Board of Elections facility. This ensures there is always a human-readable record that can be audited or recounted by hand.
- Previously, ballots submitted by facsimile or email had to be duplicated onto official ballots by a pair of election officials, in order for the ballots to be readable by the tabulating equipment.
- The tabulation of these ballots is performed by Board of Elections officials on a DS850 high speed tabulator, exactly as all other mail ballots are tabulated.

Security

The secure portal is hosted on Amazon Web Services (AWS) GovCloud, meeting the highest federal security requirements.

- FedRAMP Certified: This infrastructure is used by the Department of Defense, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security.
- Continuous Monitoring: The system undergoes 24/7/365 testing by independent cybersecurity researchers to identify and block emerging threats.
- Independent Audits: The system vendor maintains SOC 2 Type II and ISO 27001 certifications, confirming adherence to the most stringent data privacy and security standards.

In the 2024 General Election, 1,849 U.S. military servicemembers and overseas U.S. citizens successfully utilized the portal to submit their ballot securely and electronically and not having to rely on the U.S. Mail. A total of 22 voters with disabilities successfully, marked their mail ballots independently using the portal, instead of relying on an assistant. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

Miguel J. Nuñez

Executive Director

Rhode Island Board of Elections

cc: Representative Mary Messier, First Vice Chair
Representative Arthur J. Corvese, Second Vice Chair
The Honorable Members of the House State Government and Elections Committee
Steve Sepe, Committee Clerk
Nicole McCarty, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House