



CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
Canvassing Department
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January 13, 2026

The Honorable Members of the House State Government & Elections Committee
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support of House Bill 7049

Dear Chairman Shanley and Members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections,

As the Election Administrator for the City of Newport and on behalf of Chairwoman Sharon Connors of the Newport Canvassing Authority, I am writing to encourage you to **support passage of H-7049**. This bill is crucial for the smooth running of our statewide primary in 2026. It would move the currently scheduled primary from the Tuesday after Labor Day to the Wednesday after Labor Day and would prevent serious logistical, staffing, and voter education concerns around early voting and primary day.

As the schedule currently stands, local boards of canvassers and their staffs will be required to either set up polling locations on Labor Day or set up the rooms well in advance and hope they remain undisturbed over the holiday weekend. Managing our relationships with polling locations is a delicate balance of asking for access and accommodation while apologizing for the inconvenience of monopolizing their space. Adding in logistical challenges of access around Labor Day makes these relationships harder and might lead some polling locations to drop out this year. When that happens, voters are left confused about changes to their regular polling location and local boards of canvassers must find suitable alternative spaces to serve as a polling location when options are already scarce.

Our more pressing concern is that early voting under the current schedule will continue at city and town halls until 4:00 p.m. on primary day, simultaneous with traditional in person voting. This will require an additional polling location to be staffed for part of the day, increasing the number of poll workers we will need to recruit, train, and pay. Beyond these cost concerns, our main concern is the increased likelihood of voter confusion with different voting methods ending at different times on primary day. Then, looking forward to the November General

Election, there will be a different set of options because there is no holiday affecting those deadlines. This inconsistency does not serve the voters well and can be avoided with passage of H-7049.

We note that our election official colleagues in Massachusetts recently saw their legislature enact similar legislation, moving the date of their primary, in part due to logistical concerns around Labor Day as well as the need to comply with federal law concerning military and overseas mail ballots.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation. This bill is the highest priority for municipal election clerks in 2026 and passage of H-7049 will help ensure a smooth voting experience for voters and poll workers.

Respectfully submitted,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is for Hugh Moren, and the signature on the right is for Sharon Connors. Both signatures are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hugh Moren
Election Administrator

Sharon Connors
Chair, Newport Canvassing Authority

CC: Sharon Connors
J. Clement "Bud" Cicilline
Donato D'Andrea
Mary Moniz
Mary Ann Marin