



Town of Portsmouth

2200 East Main Road
Portsmouth, Rhode Island 02871

Canvassing Authority

(401) 683-3157

January 14, 2026

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

via email

RE: Portsmouth Board of Canvassers Support H-7049 (Move Date for 2026 Statewide Primary) H-7007 (Military & Disabled Voter Mail Ballots)

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

I am writing on behalf of the Portsmouth Canvassing Authority to request **support** of the House for two bills that critically impact our election processes and voter accessibility. For these reasons, they are supported by various state and local election officials, including all members of the Portsmouth Board of Canvassers.

H-7049 is a measure that will provide a temporary fix for the requirement under state law to simultaneously conduct Early Voting and Election Day Voting for the 2026 statewide primaries. Under current RI elections laws, whenever an election occurs the day after a holiday, then early voting must be conducted until 4:00 PM on Election Day. Other election officials will cover the logistical nightmare of setting up polls on a holiday, losing access to community polling locations for scheduled events, the inability to meet staffing requirements, and the burdensome costs incurred for overtime and holiday pay scales. These are all valid concerns that should be addressed. However, I would like to focus on the distrust and confusion voters experience when this occurs.

This exact scenario existed during the 2023 Congressional District 1 Special Election Primary. Portsmouth combined precincts because early voting was required to be conducted during business hours at the Town Hall. This meant that anyone could vote at Town Hall on election day from 8:30AM until 4:00PM, but specific precinct voting was 7:00AM to 8:00PM. We also could not use one of our churches because it was already scheduled for another event. Poll workers experienced irate and confused voters who did not know where they were supposed to vote, and I cannot tell you the temperature of the room when voting ended at 4:00PM at Town Hall. Accusations of duplicity and fraud ran rampant while speculations on my birth were brought to light. In the end, some voters left without casting a ballot, feeling that they were misled and deliberately disenfranchised. By supporting this bill, you can help us build voter trust and confidence needed to fully participate in elections.

H-7007 ensures that our military and disabled voters have continued access to ballots and are able to return them in a timely and convenient manner. This is a proven, secure method, overseen by the RI Department of State, which allows voters of all abilities throughout the world to participate in the democratic process. Rhode Island has the reputation of leading the nation in election innovation and voter access. Supporting this legislation ensures that we live up to that reputation.

The Portsmouth Canvassing Authority unanimously supports these initiatives. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 401-683-3157, or via email at jschulz@portsmouthri.gov. We appreciate your support.

Sincerely yours,

Jacqueline S. Schulz

Registrar of Voters

Town of Portsmouth Rhode Island

cc: Portsmouth Board of Canvassers