



CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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February 4, 2026

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

Re: Support of House Bill 7377

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

As the Election Administrator for the City of Newport and on behalf of the Newport Canvassing Authority, I am writing to encourage you to **support** passage of House Bill 7377. This bill is supported by the State Board of Elections, the RI Town & City Clerks Association, and the RI League of Cities and Towns. It would clarify and update several gray areas in how local boards of canvassers are appointed, while adding critical election security and continuity of operations best practices.

House Bill 7377 closes a number of loopholes that have caused documented delays and competing legal interpretations in how local boards of canvassers are appointed in numerous towns by clarifying the law to match existing best practices. This includes defining what constitutes a “failure” of a local party chair to submit a list by adding a 30-day “ticking clock,” and applying the same standard to the mayor or council president to submit a nomination for a vacancy to the city or town council. Which municipal leader is entitled to the nomination is also clarified. These procedures will ensure critical board seats do not remain vacant for months, affecting continuity of operations and ensuring bipartisan oversight of elections.

As an additional election security provision, and for statewide consistency in local board operations, the bill also clarifies that fixed board terms should expire on a staggered basis, only in a non-election year on the first Monday of March, which was the original intent of the General Assembly when it created local boards of canvassers via various public laws enacted in the 1920s, to ensure terms aren’t rotating out in the middle of an active election. It requires alternates to be appointed, and, using a cybersecurity best practice, establishes clear lines of communication, emergency contacts, and designates the Chief Local Election Official in each

office who is authorized to request the Secretary of State add or remove user access for the Central Voter Registration System.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation. If you have any questions on this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 401-845-5384 or via email at hmoren@cityofnewport.com. We appreciate your support.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,



Hugh Moren
Election Administrator



Sharon Connors
Chair, Newport Canvassing Authority

CC: Sharon Connors
J. Clement "Bud" Cicilline
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