



# Town of Portsmouth

2200 East Main Road  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island 02871

Canvassing Authority

(401) 683-3157

February 5, 2026

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

**RE: Portsmouth Board of Canvassers Support for H-7377 (Local Canvassing Board Appointments)**

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

I am writing on behalf of the Portsmouth Board of Canvassers (BOC) to request support for House Bill H-7377. This act updates the processes and addresses problematic areas in how local boards of canvassers are appointed. It also adds critical election security and supports continuity of operations and best practices, ensuring that a quorum is available to make critical election decisions. In addition to the unanimous support of the Portsmouth BOC, this election security bill is formally supported by the RI Town and City Clerks' Association Elections Committee, RI Board of Elections, and the RI League of Cities and Towns, and garnered considerable bi-partisan support when it was passed by the House during the 2025 General Assembly session.

H-7377 closes loopholes that delay board appointments and are subject to competing legal interpretations by 39 cities and towns. For example, it defines what constitutes a "failure" of a local party chair to submit a list by adding a 30-day "ticking clock," and applies the same standard to the mayor or council president to submit a nomination for a vacancy to the council. It also clarifies which municipal leader is entitled to the nomination, removing ambiguity, ensuring board seats do not remain vacant for months, harming continuity of operations and vital, time-sensitive election functions.

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. Using cybersecurity best practices and controls, the bill establishes clear lines of communication for emergency contacts. It also designates the Chief Local Election Official in each office who is authorized to notify the Secretary of State to add or remove user access for the Central Voter Registration System for all personnel in their office.

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](mailto:jschulz@portsmouthri.gov). We appreciate your support.

Very sincerely yours,

*Jacqueline S. Schulz*

Registrar  
Portsmouth Board of Canvassers

cc: N. Zitka (BOC chair)