



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, Secretary of State

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House Committee on State Government & Elections

RE: H7089 - An Act Relating to Elections – Nomination of Party and Independent Candidates

Dear Chair Shanley,

I write this letter in support of House Bill 7089, legislation that would move Rhode Island's primary election day a week earlier to ensure the State complies with federal law on sending mail ballots to our military and overseas voters. In addition, this bill also adjusts other administrative dates and deadlines to accommodate the primary election day change.

This legislation will benefit voters, election officials, and, specifically, our military and overseas personnel. The Department of State has an obligation to comply with the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, which requires that we send mail ballots to military and overseas voters at least 45 days before an election. With our current primary date, we can barely meet the mail ballot requirement for the general election, and Rhode Island would certainly be unable to comply with the MOVE Act should a drawn-out recount or election challenge occur. Passing this legislation will ensure our military and overseas personnel remain enfranchised in the most crucial part of the democratic process – voting.

Moreover, moving the primary date would give election officials more time to test voting equipment and prepare general election ballots. The availability of voting by mail and early voting ensures that voters who may be traveling during the earlier primary can still participate in the democratic process at a time that is convenient to them. Should this legislation pass, the Department of State is prepared to ensure the public is aware of this change before it takes effect in 2028.

I urge this Committee and the full House to support this Department of State legislative priority, as it will enhance the administration of our elections and help prevent future litigation with the federal government.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, at marias@sos.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections
The Honorable June Speakman



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, Secretary of State

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Evan P. Shanley, Chair
House Committee on State Government & Elections

RE: H7980 - An Act Relating to Elections – Registration of Voters

Dear Chair Shanley,

As Secretary of State, my priority is to enfranchise voters and make processes easier for voter engagement. I strongly support efforts to expand and simplify voter registration. I support the goal of House Bill 7980, legislation that would require the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to offer a different version of automatic voter registration to customers. Additionally, this bill requires that the Department of State maintain and adopt corresponding regulations to facilitate the administration of voter registration under this new proposed process.

The DMV provides the Department of State with the majority of voter registrations and registration updates, therefore supporting our efforts to maintain accurate voter rolls. Ultimately, automated voter registration reduces paperwork and red tape for voters.

Our main concern with this legislation is that voters are not being notified at the point of transaction about their voter registration. It is not until after a voter's name has been added to the voter list that they are then contacted and given the option to remove themselves from the voter list. While the legislation indicates that the names of voters will not be made public until after 14 days have elapsed, we are still concerned that voters will potentially be added to the voter list before they are notified.

Although the Department has apprehensions about the process outlined in the legislation to notify voters and the timeframe to make their registration public, our office has had productive conversations with the DMV and the Center for Secure and Modern Elections to determine the best approach to implement this automated voter registration process. While we do not have a position on the legislation, we will continue speaking with election officials from states that have implemented back-end AVR and see if it makes sense for Rhode Island.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, at marias@sos.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

cc: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on State Government & Elections
The Honorable Mary Messier

State House, Room 218, Providence, RI 02903

Phone: 401-222-2357 | Fax: 401-222-1356 | secretaryamore@sos.ri.gov | www.sos.ri.gov