

## Testimony on H 7981—An Action Relating to Elections—Nomination of Party and Independent Candidates

Position: Support

Common Cause Rhode Island supports H 7981 which would create a process that would allow registered voters to sign nomination papers online.

The current nominating signature process is burdensome for local election officials, and discourages participation by eligible voters. Many signatures are thrown out because the information is incomplete, or the voter does not reside in the voting district for which the nominating petition is being circulated. As a result candidates are incentivized to collect a number of signatures far in excess of those required to obtain ballot access.

An online nomination signature portal will solve many of these problems. Voters will only be able to sign petitions for offices for which they are eligible to vote and will only be able to do so if they've provided all of the necessary information. Local election officials will be able to process petitions significantly faster. Candidates may have to collect fewer signatures.

The legislation also preserves the option of collecting signatures on paper as is current practice. This is necessary because not all otherwise eligible voters would be able to provide the information needed to use the online system.

Two states—Arizona and New Mexico—have adopted online systems for collecting nominating signatures, as have several local jurisdictions. Rhode Island should join them by passing H 7981.