



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, *Secretary of State*

April 16, 2026

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

RE: In opposition of House Bill 7234, An Act Relating to Elections – Primary Elections

Dear Chair Shanley,

I write this letter in opposition to House Bill 7234, legislation that would change the primary election day to a Wednesday when Labor Day falls on a Monday and eliminates the mandate that voter registration drives occur at high schools.

As a former history and civics teacher for over thirty years, I know how crucial it is to educate our students on both our history and how to participate in our democracy. Under my administration, we have expanded the scope of our civic education program by establishing partnerships with middle and high schools across the state, including classroom visits, mock elections, and our Civic Liaison Program for students. Our goal with these programs is to encourage greater civic engagement from our youth. We believe all young people deserve meaningful civic engagement opportunities that provide them with an array of civic knowledge, skills, and experiences. The obligation imposed on local boards of canvassers to implement voter registration drives in high schools should remain a mandate, as we should do everything in our power to ensure students have the opportunity to register to vote as early as statutorily permitted.

Furthermore, as drafted, House Bill 7234 will make it difficult for elections administrators to comply with the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, potentially disenfranchising our military and overseas personnel. The MOVE Act mandates that we send mail ballots to military and overseas voters at least 45 days before an election. Simply changing the primary date without adjusting other administrative dates and deadlines makes it difficult for us to meet the mail ballot deadline for the general election.

If the Committee supports changing the date of the primary, we believe you should consider legislation introduced by Representative Speakman on behalf of our office (House Bill 7089), which would move Rhode Island's primary election day a week earlier to ensure the State complies with the MOVE Act.

Therefore, we urge this Committee and the full House to oppose House Bill 7234, as changing the primary election day without considering all other election-related deadlines will infringe upon our ability to comply with federal law, and decreasing our youth's ability to be civically engaged will lead to disenfranchisement.

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 David Place

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