



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 support of House Bill 8334, An Act Relating to Elections – Rhode Island Voting Rights Act

Dear Chair Shanley,

I write this letter in support of House Bill 8334, one of the legislative initiatives introduced at the request of the Department of State, which aims to uphold Rhode Islander's voting rights by establishing the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act (RI VRA). The purpose of the RI VRA is to codify the protections of the federal Voting Rights Act to ensure Rhode Island's elections are fair and accessible.

With federal court rulings that have diminished the power of the federal Voting Rights Act, and the current presidential Administration that aims to undermine our election process, the RI VRA would serve as a proactive measure to combat the inequities our federal institutions are perpetuating. This legislation intends to protect Rhode Island voters against voter suppression – a discriminatory tactic that limits a voter's access to cast a ballot or participate in any part of the electoral process – and vote dilution, which is the drawing of voting districts that weaken or eliminate the voting power of racial or language minorities.

Furthermore, the RI VRA codifies current federal protections of voters with limited English proficiency and for voters with disabilities into State law. To ensure access for voters who speak a language other than English, the proposed legislation goes beyond the federal requirement to offer bilingual election information in more municipalities. In addition, any voter with a disability is ensured assistance with voting or at any stage of the voting process.

This legislation also imposes prohibitions into State law regarding any person who may intimidate, deceive, or obstruct a voter's access to voting, reflecting the federal VRA. To enforce this legislation, the RI VRA creates a private right of action for voters who are victims of discriminatory electoral practices or of an electoral system that diminishes the impact of their vote on the outcome of an election, allowing them to pursue legal action against institutions that violate the Act's provisions.

With this legislation, Rhode Island law will protect voters from discrimination, suppression, and dilution, regardless of the federal government's actions, and ensure their right to vote. Therefore, I urge this Committee and the full House to support House Bill 8334, as this initiative will fortify the administration of our elections and ensure we uphold our Constitutional rights.

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 Katherine S. Kazarian

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