

Steven Sepe

From: Sara V <saravieira803@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2026 11:11 AM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Subject: Oppose H8334

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Sara Vieira and I am from Coventry and I am concerned with fair, secure, and transparent elections.

I strongly oppose House Bill 8334, which would create a new "Rhode Island Voting Rights Act."

While the bill is framed as preventing discrimination, its actual provisions create broad, vague, and subjective standards that will invite abuse rather than protect voters. The bill prohibits any "election policy or practice" that "results in, is likely to result in," or is "motivated in part" by "voter suppression" or "vote dilution" affecting protected classes. These terms are defined so expansively—including disparities in participation based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, ancestry, or even "change in marital status"—that virtually any common-sense election rule could be challenged.

For example:

- Requiring proof of identity, citizenship verification, or cleaning inaccurate voter rolls could be labeled "suppression" if a statistical disparity appears among any protected group.
- Standard districting or at-large elections could trigger "vote dilution" claims based on "racially polarized voting" or the "totality of circumstances," even without evidence of intentional discrimination. The bill explicitly states that intent is "never required."

The bill lowers the burden of proof and allows private parties, advocacy groups, and the Attorney General to sue in state court. Courts could then impose remedies, including forcing jurisdictions into a **10-year preclearance** regime where every future election change must be pre-approved. This mirrors outdated and previously struck-down federal preclearance formulas but at the state level, shifting power from elected officials and voters to judges and litigants.

Rhode Island already has strong protections under the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, the U.S. Constitution, and state election laws. We do not need a duplicative state regime that:

- Opens the door to endless lawsuits over routine administrative decisions.
- Discourages localities from implementing basic safeguards like voter ID, signature verification, or accurate voter list maintenance.
- Prioritizes statistical outcomes and group-based claims over the fundamental principle of **one person, one vote** for every eligible citizen.

Legitimate concerns about election integrity—such as non-citizen voting, ballot harvesting risks, or outdated registration data—are real and growing nationwide. HB 8334 does nothing to address these; instead, it risks weaponizing the courts against efforts to secure our elections.

I urge the Committee to reject House Bill 8334. Rhode Island voters deserve secure elections that treat every lawful ballot equally, without creating a new layer of litigation that favors well-funded advocacy groups over fair administration.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Sara Vieira

<https://ondofn.com/>