



State of Rhode Island

Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State

Gregg M. Amore, Secretary of State

February 26, 2026

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma, Chair
Senate Committee on Finance

RE: Department of State FY2026 Supplemental and FY2027 Budgets

Dear Chair DiPalma,

The Department of State serves Rhode Islanders by promoting transparent government, supporting businesses, and strengthening our democracy through a commitment to civic engagement, secure elections, and empowering voters. I write in support of the proposed Department of State's FY2026 Supplemental and FY2027 budgets, as well as additional requests to ensure our team can achieve this mission.

In FY2027, the Elections Division will administer the statewide primary and general elections. Resources provided in the proposed budget will support ballot printing; postage for mail ballots; printing and mailing costs for the Voter Information Handbook; physical security upgrades to our Elections Division office space; advertising dollars to conduct a robust voter outreach effort; and conducting a training program for local elections officials and Boards of Canvassers. The Department enters the 2026 elections after completing a comprehensive voter list maintenance mailing, which was supported by an FY2026 budget appropriation. All 741,830 active registered voters were sent a mailing that listed the information we have for them on file in the Central Voter Registration System. It provided them instructions to change their address, update their contact information or party affiliation, and add their driver's license or State ID number. As part of this mailing, 50,000 letters were returned as undeliverable, and the Elections Division changed the registration status of these voters to inactive. The statewide mailing bolstered our existing processes to keep our voter list accurate and our elections fair.

As requested, I would like to provide an update on the federal support received by the Department of State. The Elections Division receives federal funding through the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and funds pass through to the Rhode Island Board of Elections and to cities and towns. HAVA funds have been used to build and maintain the Central Voter Registration System and its data recovery center, monitor database activity, provide cybersecurity training, administer risk-limiting audits, and distribute resources to municipalities through our Election Security Grant Program. With the passage of the latest federal appropriations package, Rhode Island is set to receive \$819,000 in HAVA funds. We anticipate this appropriation will be spent on elections administration activities like those mentioned above, as well as addressing technology requiring updates, like elections equipment.

The Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) is one of the lesser-known programs managed by the Department of State, but, for the families that utilize it, it is incredibly impactful. The ACP enables victims of domestic violence, abuse, stalking, sexual assault, or human trafficking to keep their personal information safe from their abuser. We operate a mail forwarding service, where survivors can use a Department of State PO Box as a substitute address, and we ensure that we do not release their actual addresses in public information, like the voter registration file. ACP provides additional protection to survivors while leaving an abusive relationship. It also allows them to re-establish their daily lives and remain connected to the support they need while retaining their privacy. The Program was established by the General Assembly in 2022 – by legislation I was proud to sponsor in the House – and it was implemented on January 1, 2023.

The ACP currently serves 130 survivors, including 51 children – and while it continues to grow, the Program does not have its own dedicated staff. A full-time staff person would enable the Department to expand its outreach to partners in law enforcement, healthcare, schools, community-based organizations, and the Courts, and to provide more comprehensive services to program participants. We ask for your support in adding an FTE, which was not included in the Governor’s proposed budget, to support the Address Confidentiality Program.

Once again, in our capital budget request, the Department of State proposed \$800,000 in RICAP funds to update its *OpenGov* application and website, which includes the Gov Directory, the Open Meetings Portal, and the Boards & Commissions database, which was not included in the Governor’s proposal. Legislation passed in 2023 provided that “the Secretary of State Department shall maintain an up-to-date online directory of government officials” (RI General Laws 22-3-12). This project will enable the Department’s Public Information Division to comply with this requirement and increase the accuracy and transparency of information for members of the public. It is also essential to meeting my goals of encouraging civic engagement by providing an accurate, user-friendly tool for Rhode Islanders to learn about and engage with their government. I encourage the Senate Committee on Finance to consider this request and fund the update to the *OpenGov* application with RICAP funds or General Revenue.

I appreciate the support of the Senate Committee on Finance on this budget to ensure the Department of State can accomplish its mission. If you have any questions about the Governor’s budget proposals or these supplemental requests, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, at marias@sos.ri.gov. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregg M. Amore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gregg M. Amore
Secretary of State

cc: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Finance