



CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND
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February 20, 2026

The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support of Senate Bill 2147

Dear Chairman LaMountain and Members of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary,

As the Election Administrator for the City of Newport and on behalf of the Newport Canvassing Authority, I am writing to encourage you to **support passage of S-2147**. This bill is crucial for the smooth running of our Statewide Primary in 2026. It would move the currently scheduled primary from the Tuesday after Labor Day to the Wednesday after Labor Day and would prevent serious logistical, staffing, and voter education concerns around early voting and primary day. Moving the primary to Wednesday, when it occurs during the week of Labor Day, has officially been supported in 2026 by the RI Board of Elections, RI League of Cities and Towns, the RI Town and City Clerks Association, and Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore, among others.

We note the House has recently passed its companion bill, H-7049aa, with a minor technical floor amendment. We ask the Senate to consider the same amendment to ensure the bill texts matches, if it is considered for passage.

As the schedule currently stands, local boards of canvassers and their staffs will be required to either set up polling locations on Labor Day or set up the rooms well in advance and hope they remain undisturbed over the holiday weekend. Managing our relationships with polling locations is a delicate balance of asking for access and accommodation while apologizing for the inconvenience of monopolizing their space. Adding in logistical challenges of access around Labor Day makes these relationships harder and might lead some polling locations to drop out this year. When that happens, voters are left confused about changes to their regular polling location and local boards of canvassers must find suitable alternative spaces to serve as a polling location when options are already scarce.

Our more pressing concern is that early voting under the current schedule will continue at city and town halls until 4:00 p.m. on Primary Day, simultaneous with traditional in-person voting. This will require an additional polling location to be staffed for part of the day, increasing the number of poll workers we will need to recruit, train, and pay. Beyond these cost concerns, our main concern is the increased likelihood of voter confusion with different voting methods ending at different times on Primary Day. Then, looking forward to the November General Election, there will be a different set of options because there is no holiday affecting those deadlines. This inconsistency does not serve the voters well and can be avoided with passage of S-2147.

There are also security and election integrity concerns that, in specific circumstances, could defeat safeguards intended to prevent attempted double voting, as our elections laws were not written to properly accommodate simultaneous early voting and Primary Day voting. Emergency mail ballot requests will also continue on Primary Day itself, until 4:00 p.m. that day, instead of ending at 4:00 p.m. the day before, which is in direct conflict with state law's clear intent to cut off requests for emergency mail ballots at 4:00 p.m. the day before an election.

We note that our election official colleagues in Massachusetts recently saw their legislature enact similar legislation, moving the date of their primary, in part due to logistical concerns around Labor Day as well as the need to comply with federal law concerning military and overseas mail ballots.

46 other states avoid this issue entirely by holding their primary elections before September, either in the spring or summer, in part due to federal law, which requires overseas military mail ballots to be sent out at least 45 days prior to the November election – a deadline Rhode Island barely meets. We also support legislation introduced by Secretary of State Amore that will, starting in 2028, move up the Primary by one full week, however, it is imperative to also address this issue now to avoid difficulties for voters and election administrators in the conduct of the 2026 Statewide Primary Election.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important legislation. This bill is the highest priority for municipal election clerks in 2026 and passage of S-2147 will help ensure a smooth voting experience for voters and poll workers.

Respectfully submitted,



Hugh Moren
Election Administrator



Sharon Connors
Chair, Newport Canvassing Authority