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ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 26-S 2282, RELATING ELECTIONS – LOCAL CANVASSING AUTHORITIES February 26, 2026

This proposed legislation has three sections, all addressing the methods by which local boards of canvassers must notify residents of various election-related matters. The ACLU of Rhode Island supports these various amendments to the election laws for the reasons noted below.

a. *Amendment to R.I.G.L. §17-8-10.* Presently, boards of canvassers are required to advertise in a newspaper and post in at least three public locations detailed information about any local bond or referendum questions appearing on the ballot. This proposed amendment would further require public bodies to post the information on the municipality's website, and allow waiver of the newspaper requirement if information about the ballot questions is mailed to qualified voter households. Because these amendments all serve to further public access to this information, the ACLU supports them.

b. *Amendment to add R.I.G.L. §17-8-11.* For all the reasons expressed above, we support this proposed amendment which would require local boards to advertise times of early voting both on their municipal website and through newspaper advertisements. Like information about ballot questions, this is an important piece of data that deserves widespread circulation through various media.

c. *Amendment to R.I.G.L. §17-9.1-3.* This amendment would permit boards of canvassers to post notice of unusual voter registration hours on the municipality's website instead of via a newspaper advertisement. Although we generally oppose the elimination of newspaper advertising requirements for public matters, we do not object to it in this instance due both to the niche nature of this particular notification and when combined with the proposal's inclusion of language requiring the website posting to be "conspicuous and prominent."

Finally, we support the inclusion of language in all three statutes being amended that contains a reference to WCAG standards in order to ensure accessibility of all this information to the visually impaired.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.