

## Testimony of Common Cause Rhode Island in Support of S 3044--An Act Relating to Elections--Registration of Voters

### Position: Support

Common Cause Rhode Island supports efforts to encourage voter registration and to keep the voter rolls up-to-date. That is why we support S 3044.

In 2017 the General Assembly enacted a system of automatic voter registration (AVR) and it has made our voter rolls more accurate and secure. That system is known as “front-end AVR” and it occurs at the point of transaction at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) where the potential registrant is given the opportunity to “opt-out” of registration.

This legislation would update that system to what is commonly known as “back-end AVR.” Instead of allowing for the opt-out during the transaction it happens when the potential voter is sent a postcard soon after their visit to the DMV. For voters who are already registered but have supplied the DMV with updated address information, the postcard will allow them to correct any problems with their new address. This is the next step in creating a modern and secure election system for Rhode Island.

There are several benefits to a back-end system. It will keep the voter rolls more up-to-date by capturing additional address changes. Our voter rolls will be more complete and accurate. The result will be fewer provisional ballots that potentially disenfranchise eligible voters.

In addition to keeping the voter rolls up-to-date with the latest address information, back-end AVR will prevent errors in the voter rolls by minimizing data entry mistakes. By eliminating that additional data entry from paper forms, and the time consumed by DMV clerks on the registration process, there will be cost savings to the state by streamlining the process for customers at the DMV.

Finally, back-end AVR will increase voter registration. Several states have already adopted this type of automatic voter registration, including Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Massachusetts, Nevada and Oregon. States that have implemented back-end AVR have higher rates of voter turnout than Rhode Island.

For these reasons, Common Cause Rhode Island supports S 3044 and we urge the Committee to support the modernization and security of our elections.