



RE: S 3143 - Rhode Island Voting Rights Act - SUPPORT

Hearing: April 7, 2026, Senate Committee on Judiciary

The Honorable Matthew LaMountain, Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island, I write in strong support of the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act, S 3143.

Born out of the struggle to secure voting rights for women, the League's core mission is to empower all voters and strengthen democracy. We believe that voting is a fundamental right and that all eligible voters should have equal opportunity to exercise that right.

Full access to the electoral process is essential to a functioning democracy. And while we have made progress, too many Rhode Islanders still face disproportionate barriers to participation in elections based on factors such as race, gender, language, disability, health, age, and marital status. A right that cannot be fully exercised is not truly a right.

At the same time, threats to voting rights are increasing. The U.S. Supreme Court has weakened key provisions of the landmark 1965 Voting Rights Act. Congress has failed to act. Federal enforcement has diminished. In this moment, states must lead.

Rhode Island has the opportunity and responsibility to enshrine strong protections for voters in state law. The RIVRA will protect Rhode Islanders against vote dilution, vote suppression, and voter intimidation.

All Rhode Island voters deserve equal access to the ballot box. This bill ensures that, regardless of shifting federal priorities, the right to vote in Rhode Island will remain protected and secure. It guarantees that voters can cast their ballots freely, without obstruction.

And while the League supports safeguarding protections for all voters, we are equally pleased to see the bill's inclusion of sex and marital status as protected classes, particularly given the federal government's most recent assault on the rights of women voters.

S 3143 is a common-sense, pro-voter bill that solidifies and builds upon the protections in the federal Voting Rights Act. It strengthens transparency and accountability. It creates clearer, more effective pathways to address voter disenfranchisement—critical steps for building public trust and increasing participation in elections.

Finally, while the League supports S 3143, we also support the proposed amendments outlined in the written testimony of the Campaign Legal Center, to better align the legislation with federal law and further strengthen its impact.

For more than a century, the League of Women Voters has stood unapologetically on the side of voters—especially those historically excluded from full participation in our democracy. At its core, this legislation takes steps toward a more equitable government where every voice is heard and every vote counts equally.

We urge this Committee to favorably report S 3143 to the full Senate for approval.

Respectfully,

Gene Thompson-Grove
Newport, RI
President, League of Women Voters of Rhode Island