
Oppose S 3143

From Sara V <saravieira803@hotmail.com>
Date Tue 4/7/2026 11:10 AM
To Senate Judiciary Committee <SenateJudiciary@rilegislature.onmicrosoft.com>

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Sara Vieira and I live in Coventry. I strongly oppose Senate Bill 3143, the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act.

While the bill claims to prevent discrimination and protect voting rights, its broad, vague language creates far more problems than it solves. It risks turning Rhode Island's elections into a perpetual **lawsuit factory**, undermining voter confidence, complicating election administration, and potentially interfering with proven, straightforward voting methods.

1. Vague Standards Invite Endless Litigation

S3143 prohibits any "election policy or practice" that "results in, is likely to result in," or is "motivated in whole or in part" by voter suppression or vote dilution. It defines violations based on **material disparities** in participation or "totality of circumstances" — without requiring proof of intent. This language is extremely broad. Almost any common-sense election rule (voter ID requirements, polling place locations, mail ballot deadlines, signature verification, or even traditional single-choice voting systems) could be challenged in court if a disparity exists between demographic groups. Rhode Island would face costly, time-consuming lawsuits from activists, organizations, or the Attorney General — even when no intentional discrimination exists. Courts, not elected officials or voters, would end up deciding how our elections are run.

2. Threat to Transparent and Simple Election Methods

The bill specifically targets "methods of election" and allows courts to order "alternative methods" as remedies for alleged vote dilution. This opens the door to judicial imposition of complex systems such as **ranked-choice voting (RCV)** or proportional representation in local or state races.

Ranked-choice voting has serious documented flaws, especially in local elections:

- Higher rates of **ballot exhaustion**, where votes (disproportionately from minority and lower-information voters) are discarded before final rounds.
- Increased **marking errors** and confusion, with studies showing error rates 10 times higher than traditional voting.
- Winners who often receive far less than a true majority of all ballots cast.
- Administrative delays, higher costs, and reduced transparency — making hand recounts and audits far more difficult.

Dozens of cities and towns across the country have tried RCV and later repealed it. At least **19 states** have now banned or prohibited ranked-choice voting precisely because of these problems. Rhode

Island should not enact a law that could pressure or enable localities to adopt a system that confuses voters and weakens electoral accountability.

3. Undermines Election Confidence and Integrity

Rhode Island already has strong protections under the federal Voting Rights Act and state law. This bill adds duplicative, overly aggressive state-level rules with a private right of action, expedited court proceedings, and potential judicial pre-approval of future election changes. The result will be more uncertainty, delayed certifications, and eroded public trust — especially in a small state with limited election resources.

Voters deserve elections that are **simple, secure, transparent, and verifiable**. They should not fear that routine administrative decisions or traditional voting formats will trigger federal-style lawsuits.

Recommendation

I urge you to **reject Senate Bill 3143** in its current form. Rhode Island should focus on proven reforms that increase access without sacrificing security or simplicity — such as better voter education, secure chain-of-custody for ballots, and accurate voter rolls — rather than creating new avenues for litigation and judicial overreach.

I respectfully ask that you vote “No” on S3143 to protect the integrity and trustworthiness of Rhode Island elections.

Thank you,
Mrs. Sara Vieira

<https://ondofn.com/>