



State of Rhode Island

**Department of State | Office of the Secretary of State**

**Gregg M. Amore, Secretary of State**

April 7, 2026

The Honorable Matthew L. Mountain, Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

RE: In support of  
S3143 (Lawson) An Act Relating to Elections – Rhode Island Voting Rights Act; and  
S3201 (LaMountain) An Act Relating to Elections – Nomination of Party and Independent Candidates

Dear Chair LaMountain,

I write this letter in support of the legislative package introduced at the request of the Department of State, which aims to increase civic participation, improve election administrative processes, and uphold Rhode Islander's voting rights.

**Senate Bill 3142 (Lawson)** would establish the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act (RI VRA). The purpose of the RI VRA is to codify the protections of the federal Voting Rights Act to ensure Rhode Island's elections are fair and accessible.

With federal court rulings that have diminished the power of the federal Voting Rights Act, and the current presidential Administration that aims to undermine our election process, the RI VRA would serve as a proactive measure to combat the inequities our federal institutions are perpetuating. This legislation intends to protect Rhode Island voters against voter suppression – a discriminatory tactic that limits a voter's access to cast a ballot or participate in any part of the electoral process – and vote dilution, which is the drawing of voting districts that weaken or eliminate the voting power of racial or language minorities.

Furthermore, the RI VRA codifies current federal protections of voters with limited English proficiency and for voters with disabilities into State law. To ensure access for voters who speak a language other than English, the proposed legislation goes beyond the federal requirement to offer bilingual ballots and election information in more municipalities. In addition, any voter with a disability is ensured assistance with voting or at any stage of the voting process.

This legislation also imposes similar federal prohibitions into State law regarding any person who may intimidate, deceive, or obstruct a voter's access to voting.

To enforce this legislation, the RI VRA creates a private right of action for voters who are victims of discriminatory electoral practices or of an electoral system that diminishes the impact of their vote on the outcome of an election, allowing them to pursue legal action against institutions that violate the Act's provisions.

With this legislation, Rhode Island law will protect voters from discrimination, suppression, and dilution, regardless of the federal government's actions, and ensure their right to vote.

**Senate Bill 3201 (LaMountain)** would allow voters to electronically sign nomination papers for candidates in a voter's district through the Department of State's Voter Information Center website.

With the success of online voter registration and the online mail ballot application system, it is clear that voters are increasingly inclined to use online tools, and we believe we can offer participation in the nomination papers process in the same way. We envision the online portal would function similarly to the online mail ballot application, where voters would have to log in to their voter record by providing their first name, last name, date

of birth, and zip code, and input their Rhode Island driver's license or State identification number to validate their identity. The online portal would serve as a complementary tool, as candidates would still be able to use the current paper-based nomination paper system.

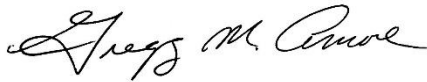
Importantly, the online portal offers greater opportunities for enfranchisement for our military and overseas voters, as well as for voters with disabilities, by encouraging their participation in a process that is not easily or readily accessible to them. All voters deserve the opportunity to participate in our entire democratic process.

With this bill, voters will be better informed about the candidates they are eligible to vote for; candidates will have more opportunities to qualify for ballot placement; and local canvassing authorities will have a reduced workload in approving online nomination signatures, as voters will have already validated their identity.

I urge this Committee and the full Senate to support these two bills in the Department of State's legislative package, as these initiatives will improve the administration of our elections, remove barriers to civic participation, and ensure we uphold our Constitutional rights.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Michelle Arias, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, at [marias@sos.ri.gov](mailto:marias@sos.ri.gov).

Sincerely,



Gregg M. Amore  
Secretary of State

cc: The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary  
The Honorable Valarie J. Lawson