

2026 -- H 7378

=====  
LC003496  
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- LOCAL CANVASSING AUTHORITIES

Introduced By: Representatives Baginski, and Paplauskas

Date Introduced: January 28, 2026

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

- 1           SECTION 1. Section 17-8-10 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-8 entitled "Local  
2   Canvassing Authorities" is hereby amended to read as follows:
- 3           **17-8-10. Publication of local questions to be submitted to voters.**
- 4           (a) ~~Prior~~ At least twenty-five (25) days prior to each local election at which public questions  
5   are to be submitted, the local board shall cause to be prominently posted in at least three (3) local  
6   public locations and advertised at least once in a newspaper of local circulation, ~~or in lieu of the~~  
7   ~~requirement to place the advertisement in a newspaper of local circulation, the City of Pawtucket~~  
8   ~~may mail to the household of each registered voter prior to the election~~ the full text of each  
9   legislative act to be acted upon and the election date, or the local board may substitute a description  
10   of the text of each act in lieu of the full text, together with the following information:
- 11           (1) The designated number of the question;
- 12           (2) A brief caption of the question;
- 13           (3) A brief explanation of the measure that is the subject matter of the question; and
- 14           (4) A notice that voter fraud is a felony and the penalty for voter fraud. This notice shall be  
15   in conspicuous lettering and shall contain the following language: "You must be registered to vote  
16   from your actual place of residence."
- 17           (b) If the public question involves the issuance of bonds or other evidence of indebtedness  
18   or any other long-term financial obligation such as a lease, the notice required by subsection (a) of  
19   this section shall also include at least the following information to be provided:

1 (1) The estimated total cost of the project or program, including financing (using a  
2 reasonable assumed rate of interest), legal, and other costs.

3 (2) The estimated useful life of the project, and the term of the bonds, other indebtedness,  
4 or other obligation.

5 (3) A reasonably detailed description of the project or program, its purposes, and a project  
6 timetable.

7 (c) The local board shall additionally publish a conspicuous and prominent notice,  
8 containing all of the same information on the municipality's website for at least twenty-five (25)  
9 consecutive days leading up to and including the date of the election, where the local question(s)  
10 are certified to appear on the ballot. Said notice shall reasonably comply with the most recent,  
11 commonly adopted Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which shall be no less than  
12 2.0 compliance level AA.

13 (d) The local board may, at its discretion, substitute the newspaper advertising  
14 requirements listed in subsection (a) of this section, by mailing a notice containing all of the same  
15 information to each voter household in the applicable election jurisdiction, in addition to  
16 prominently posting the same in at least three (3) local public locations.

17 SECTION 2. Chapter 17-8 of the General Laws entitled "Local Canvassing Authorities" is  
18 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

19 **17-8-11. Publication of early voting dates, hours, and location.**

20 (a) The local board shall advertise the dates, hours, and location of early voting in a  
21 newspaper of general circulation in the city or town, at least once prior to the commencement of  
22 any in-person early voting period to be conducted by the local board, and at least once while that  
23 same early voting period is underway.

24 (b) The local board shall publish a conspicuous and prominent notice on the municipality's  
25 website of the dates, hours, and location of early voting, and said notice shall remain published  
26 throughout the duration of any in-person early voting period conducted by the local board. Said  
27 notice shall reasonably comply with the most recent, commonly adopted Web Content Accessibility  
28 Guidelines (WCAG), which shall be no less than 2.0 compliance level AA.

29 SECTION 3. Section 17-9.1-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-9.1 entitled "Registration  
30 of Voters" is hereby amended to read as follows:

31 **17-9.1-3. Periods when boards receive registrations.**

32 (a) The local boards shall open their respective offices for the purposes of receiving  
33 ~~registration~~ registrations of voters throughout the year during ~~the~~ their regular business hours.  
34 Registration for any election shall close on the thirtieth (30th) day preceding an election; ~~provided,~~

1 ~~that local boards shall not receive the registration on Sundays or legal holidays, and may receive~~  
2 ~~the registrations during additional hours each day from the fortieth (40th) to the thirtieth (30th) day~~  
3 ~~before any election.~~ Nothing contained in this section shall be construed as restricting the right of  
4 local boards, statewide or local registration agents, or members of the general assembly to accept  
5 registrations of voters on any day or at any time. The acceptance of registrations at any other time  
6 shall not affect the validity of any election.

7 (b) Notwithstanding any other sections of the general laws to the contrary, all local boards  
8 of canvassers shall remain open from eight-thirty (8:30) a.m. until four o'clock (4:00) p.m. on the  
9 last day prescribed by law for the ~~taking~~ receiving of voter registrations to permit participation of  
10 the voters in the next succeeding election. In the event that the last day prescribed by law for the  
11 ~~taking~~ receiving of voter registrations is a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, then the local board  
12 may;

13 (1) Designate one publicly accessible location in the city or town at which voter  
14 registrations will be ~~taken~~ received; and

15 (2) Designate the hours during which voter ~~registration~~ registrations will be ~~taken~~ received  
16 at that location, which hours shall include the hours from one o'clock (1:00) p.m. until four o'clock  
17 (4:00) p.m.

18 (c) If a local board does designate a location other than its regular place of business or does  
19 designate hours other than eight-thirty o'clock (8:30) a.m. until four o'clock (4:00) p.m., it shall:

20 (1) ~~Publicly announce~~ Prominently post in at least three (3) local public locations those  
21 designation(s) at least ten (10) days prior to the last day provided by law for the ~~taking~~ receiving  
22 of voter registrations; and

23 (2) Advertise those designation(s) in a newspaper of general circulation in the city or town  
24 at least twice prior to the last day prescribed by law for the ~~taking~~ receiving of voter registrations.  
25 The local board may substitute advertising in a newspaper by posting a conspicuous and prominent  
26 notice of those designation(s) on the municipality's website, for at least ten (10) consecutive days  
27 leading up to and including the last day prescribed by law for the receiving of voter registrations  
28 for any election. Said notice shall reasonably comply with the most recent, commonly adopted Web  
29 Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which shall be no less than 2.0 compliance level AA.

30 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

=====  
LC003496  
=====

EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- LOCAL CANVASSING AUTHORITIES

\*\*\*

1           This act would require the local board to publish early voting dates, hours, and location, at  
2   least twice in a newspaper of general circulation within the city or town, and to publish the same  
3   on the municipality's website for the duration of the in-person early voting period.

4           This act would permit the substitution of advertising the voter registration deadline in a  
5   newspaper by posting notice of designation(s) on the municipality's website, continuously, for at  
6   least ten (10) consecutive days leading up to the last day prescribed by law for the receiving of  
7   voter registrations.

8           This act would require the local board to publish local ballot questions on its website for  
9   25 consecutive days, and to authorize the substitution of newspaper advertisements if a jurisdiction-  
10   wide household mailing containing the same information is instead sent.

11          This act would take effect upon passage.

=====  
LC003496  
=====