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THE CITY OF CRANSTON

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

REQUESTING THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONSIDER SWIFT ACTION TO CHANGE THE DATE OF THE SEPTEMBER 2026 RHODE ISLAND STATEWIDE PRIMARY ELECTION DUE TO CONCERNS REGARDING THE LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

No.

Passed:

Daniel R. Wall, *Council President*

WHEREAS, under current state law, the 2026 Rhode Island Statewide Primary Election is scheduled to be held on September 8, 2026, which is the day immediately following Labor Day, a major state and federal holiday; and

WHEREAS, in the City of Cranston, 26 polling locations will need to be set up and prepared by work crews from seven different city departments for 15 hours on Labor Day, adding significantly to the City's election costs and creating numerous logistical complications due to the inaccessibility of some polling locations, and unavailability of sufficient personnel on a holiday weekend; and

WHEREAS, these costs and logistical problems will be exacerbated on a statewide basis across all 39 cities and towns, including over 400 polling locations, possibly costing an additional \$200,000 for municipalities, which has caused town clerks and election directors, and the full Rhode Island Town and City Clerks' Association, to request a legislative change to mitigate these issues; and

WHEREAS, the deadline for early voting to end, as well as the emergency mail ballot application deadline, which are typically at 4 p.m. on the day prior to every election, will, due to an irreconcilable conflict in the state's uniform deadlines statute, instead fall on the day of the primary itself. This has resulted in serious concerns from Rhode Island's local election officials regarding their logistical capability to administer both the early voting process and simultaneously operate regular polling locations, many of which are located in the same physical spaces as early voting sites, including Cranston's Peter T. Pastore, Jr. Youth Center, which may confuse voters and severely complicate the efficient conduct of the September Primary; and

WHEREAS, because early voting will take place on the same day as the Primary, all 39 cities and towns, including Cranston, will need to recruit, hire, train, and pay additional poll workers in order to conduct both legally mandated processes simultaneously; and

WHEREAS, because of these and other serious concerns, the Cranston Board of Canvassers voted unanimously on January 8, 2026 to officially support legislation to move the 2026 Statewide Primary Election one (1) day, to the Wednesday following Labor Day, which would mitigate these serious cost, logistical, operational, and staffing concerns; and

48 **WHEREAS**, the state Board of Elections, in response to concerns received from multiple
49 municipalities, including Cranston, voted unanimously on January 13, 2026, to support the request
50 to the General Assembly to consider legislation changing the date of the 2026 Statewide Primary
51 Election to Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2026; and
52

53 **WHEREAS**, Rhode Island Secretary of State Gregg M. Amore, the state’s Chief Elections Official
54 under the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA), is on record as supporting a change in the date
55 of the 2026 Statewide Primary Election to Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2026, provided such a change is
56 enacted by the General Assembly early enough in the legislative session in order to provide
57 adequate time for effective voter and candidate communications; and
58

59 **WHEREAS**, both the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks’ Association and Rhode Island League
60 of Cities and Towns are each on record in supporting a change in the date of the September Primary
61 due to the Labor Day issue when this matter has been debated in past legislative sessions; and
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63 **WHEREAS**, existing state law already provides for primaries to be held on Wednesdays due to
64 religious holidays, which last occurred in September 2018, a statewide primary that was held on a
65 Wednesday successfully, with no noted detrimental impact for voters; and
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67 **WHEREAS**, Rhode Island and Massachusetts have among the latest primaries in the United States,
68 however, the Massachusetts Legislature enacted a bill in September 2025 changing the date of their
69 primary, in part due to the same Labor Day concerns, stating it was “necessary for the immediate
70 preservation of the public convenience” and for the “orderly administration” of the election.
71

72 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Honorable Cranston City Council hereby
73 agrees with the serious concerns raised by Cranston’s Board of Canvassers and state and local
74 election officials throughout Rhode Island, and supports the effort to change the date of the 2026
75 Statewide Primary Election to Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2026; and be it further
76

77 **RESOLVED**, that the Cranston City Council urges immediate consideration and passage of
78 legislation anticipated to be introduced to address the date of the 2026 Statewide Primary Election,
79 and future years’ primaries where the election would fall on the day following Labor Day; and be it
80 further
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82 **RESOLVED**, that the Cranston City Council respectfully requests the General Assembly consider
83 and enact this date change in Title 17 of the Rhode Island General Laws, and that all Cranston
84 Representatives and Senators work diligently to support passage of this change; and be it further
85

86 **RESOLVED**, that the City Clerk forward a copy of this Resolution to the Hon. Speaker of the
87 House of Representatives, the Hon. Senate President, the Hon. Majority and Minority Leaders of
88 the House and Senate, the Hon. Chairperson of the House State Government and Elections
89 Committee, the Hon. Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, and to all Hon.
90 Representatives and Senators who represent the City of Cranston.
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93 Sponsored by: Council President Daniel Wall and Council Minority Leader Richard Campopiano
94

95 Referred to Ordinance Committee February 4, 2026