

## **Summary of Proposed Amendments to the Rhode Island Voting Rights Act (H 8334/S 3143) as drafted by the Campaign Legal Center and supported by the Rhode Island Voting Access Coalition**

- Make regional school districts subject to the RIVRA, but exclude elections for party offices.
- Move the protections for voters based on their, "religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, country of ancestral origin, or change in marital status" to a standalone section of the bill law because the section it was placed in was written specifically to deal with claims based on race.
- Add to the section on factors for a court to consider when evaluating claims of discrimination several additional factors from the model state Voting Rights Act bill developed by the Campaign Legal Center, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and other voting rights groups.
- Add to the section on guidelines for a court to consider when evaluating claims of discrimination one additional guideline from the model state Voting Rights Act.
- Change the frequency that the Secretary of State must make a determination which communities are subject to the top tier of the language access provision (communities with language minority populations of 5% or greater than 10,000 people) from every ten years to every five years, like it is in the federal Voting Rights Act.
- Change the process for determining which communities are subject to the lower tier of the language access provision (communities with language minority populations 3% or greater than 5,000 people) from one where a community member must make a request, to one where the Secretary of State makes the determination automatically.
- Strengthen the language in the attorney's fees portion of the bill by specifying what types of costs are recoverable.
- Add language that would allow for the awarding of attorney's fees for preparation of "notice letters" which is a pre-litigation way of remedying possible discrimination.
- Add to the remedies section several provisions from the model state Voting Rights Act.
- Change the effective date for all sections of the bill to "upon passage" except the language access, database and provisional ballot sections, all of which will require time to implement.