



# RIVAC

RI Voting Access Coalition

April 28, 2025

Senator Jack Reed  
1 Exchange Terrace  
Providence, RI 02903

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse  
170 Westminster Street, Suite 200  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Senators Reed and Whitehouse:

We write today as members of the Rhode Island Voting Access Coalition (RIVAC), the state's largest coalition of groups dedicated to expanding access to the ballot, and others, to ask you to oppose the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act if it comes before the U.S. Senate. We urge you to use all of the procedural tools available to you to stop the SAVE Act from becoming law and disenfranchising thousands of your constituents.

The SAVE Act would require documentary proof of citizenship (e.g. a birth certificate, U.S. Passport, or naturalization papers) to register to vote, or update a voter registration, for federal elections. This change would disenfranchise thousands of Rhode Islanders who are otherwise eligible to vote but cannot access the documentation. Estimates are that 21 million Americans do not have access to the documentation that would be required under the SAVE Act.<sup>1</sup> Acquiring the underlying documentation would be both time consuming and expensive.

The SAVE Act would disproportionately affect women. It would require married women who change their surname to produce marriage documents matching their birth or

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<sup>1</sup> See:

<https://cdce.umd.edu/sites/cdce.umd.edu/files/pubs/Voter%20ID%20survey%20Key%20Results%20June%202024.pdf>

naturalization documents. It's estimated that almost 80% of women take their husband's name when they marry.<sup>2</sup> It would also create additional barriers to voting for transgender people in our state, who face increased difficulty obtaining accurate identity documents.

The SAVE Act would upend our current systems for voter registration in Rhode Island. The SAVE Act would only allow voters to use their driver's license to register if it is an "enhanced driver's license." At this time Rhode Island does not offer that type of license, rendering our current automatic and online voter registration systems useless. Additionally, it would require the presentation of the proof of citizenship documents "in person," rendering our current process of voter registration through the mail useless. Ultimately it may lead to the creation of separate voter registration systems for state and federal elections, a burden not only on voters but on election officials.

Rhode Island has made great strides in modernizing our voter registration system in the last decade, adopting online voter registration and automatic voter registration. Much of that success has come because of the hard work of our organizations to push forward voter registration modernization efforts in Rhode Island. The SAVE Act would be an enormous setback to those efforts.

We urge you to do whatever you can to oppose passage of the SAVE Act.

Sincerely,

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<sup>2</sup> See:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/09/07/about-eight-in-ten-women-in-opposite-sex-marriages-say-they-took-their-husbands-last-name/>

*RIVAC Member Organizations (listed alphabetically):*

ACLU of Rhode Island	Rhode Island AFL-CIO
ARISE	Rhode Island Coalition of Black Women
Better Elections Rhode Island	Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights
Brown Votes	Rhode Island Democratic Women's Caucus
Clean Water Action Rhode Island	Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Climate Action Rhode Island	Rhode Island NOW
Common Cause Rhode Island	Rhode Island Working Families Power
Housing Network of Rhode Island	SEIU 1199NE
Jim Vincent, Civil Rights Advocate	The Womxn Project
Latino Policy Institute	Women's Fund of Rhode Island
League of Women Voters of Rhode Island	
Ocean State Ranked Choice Voting	
Providence Alumnae Chapter of Delta	
Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.	

*Other signatory organizations (listed alphabetically):*

HERspace	RI Poor People's Campaign
Judith Kaye Training & Consulting	The Persisters
Nora's Haven	Toward an Anti-Racist North Kingstown

*Individual signatories (listed alphabetically):*

Donnie Anderson	Sarah Cardin
Lisa Archie	Susan Chakmakian
Mikaila Arthur	Lucy Christie
Hilarie Auboiss	John Clark
Lisa Barsumian	Laura Clarke
Daisy Bassen	Nancy Cloud
Lisa Beade	Marc Cohen
Cassandra Bean	Katherine Conte
Nancy Bennett	Patricia DeFrancesco
Jennifer Bergevine	Melanie DeSantis
Aimee Blanchette	Heather DeSisto
Martha Boksenbaum	Holly Dirks
Lliann Borkman	Shannon Donahue
Maia Brumberg-Kraus	Melanie Ducharme

Susan Dunnington  
Betsi Dwyer  
Olivia Edwards  
Georgine Edwards  
Tim Engels  
Kathie Florsheim  
Danielle Forte  
Jodi Glass  
Mary Hall Keen  
Cadence Hansen  
Ruth Horton  
Pam Jackson  
Catherine Jameson  
Rachel Jarosz  
Leo Jarosz  
Peter Kaczmarek  
Alison Kaczmarek  
Judy Kaye  
Jim Kingston  
Aubrey Kozikowski  
Penny Krebs  
Michele L'Heureux  
Katherine Lacasse  
Pamela Lacerda  
Melissa Leahey  
Jennifer Lima  
Kate Lohman  
Brenda Loster  
Carol Mack  
Darcy Magratten  
Corrine Mang  
Emily Markovitz  
Michelle Martins-Botelho  
Jennifer McGrath  
Dan Meehan  
Jessica Mencunas  
Libby Merrill  
Kelly Metzger  
Scott Mirani

Sarah Morenon  
Camille Nixon  
Emily Olson  
Sarah O'Reilly  
Judy Ortman  
David Ouellette  
Judy Ouellette  
Eduardo Paguaga  
Amy Paulsen  
Nancy Peterson  
Amy Pickworth  
Pamela Poniatowski  
Susan Razza  
Jennifer Ribeiro  
Joanne Rich  
Jennifer Romanat  
Heidi Ross  
Jennifer Rourke  
Catherine Saunders  
Theresa Schimmel  
Jennifer Schnell  
Elizabeth Scott  
Allison Seeley  
Carol Shedd  
Maureen Sigler  
Edward Slota  
Cathy Solomon  
Jennifer Stark  
Judith Stokes  
Christine Sullivan  
Kaeli Sutton  
Julie Talbutt  
Kristin Turchetta  
Deborah Valletta  
Stacey White  
Elizabeth White  
Stephanie Widman  
Martha Young