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### POLITICAL SCENE

## How RI's elections could look different in 2026, 2028



Rhode Island Secretary of State Gregg Amore leads a civics program for high school seniors at the Marriott Hotel in Providence at the Rhode Island Civic Leadership Summit on April 18, 2024. KRIS CRAIG/THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL

**Katherine Gregg**  
Providence Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Should Rhode Island move the date of its presidential primary again?

Given how many people at the State House are lining up behind this latest effort to make Lil' Rhody more relevant in the presidential sweepstakes, it's a good bet Rhode Island will join the states that vote on "Super Tuesday" in 2028.

Who is supporting the move? The House speaker, the past and present state Democratic Party chairs and, in a rare display of agreement on a matter of Rhode Island politics, the chairman of the state Republican Party.

There are a few naysayers. But the bill, H7090, came flying out of the House

Committee on State Government & Elections on a 12-to-0 vote on March 31 and is headed for a full House debate and vote as soon as this week.

### Why are there 68 election-focused bills this session?

The bill is one of 68 election-centric bills in the legislative hopper this election year.

Others would move the September 2026 primary date to Wednesday to redefine how three of the state's top five officeholders run for office, and would safeguard voting rights in the face of perceived efforts by President **Donald Trump** and congressional Republicans to restrict who can vote in the midterm elections and beyond.

Shaping the conversation is the executive order Trump signed on March 31 to create a nationwide list of verified eligible voters, and the words of former Secretary of Homeland Security **Kristi Noem** from February saying they need to be proactive to make sure "we have the right people voting, electing the right leaders to lead this country."

The right people voting? Electing the right leaders?

Suffice it to say, armies of lawyers, legislators, voting rights advocates and ordinary citizens are fighting on multiple fronts, including the streets, the State House and the U.S. District Court, to prevent Trump and the national GOP from seizing control of elections from

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## U.S.-Iran ceasefire on tenuous ground

### Israel continues attacks on Lebanon

**Swapna Venugopal Ramaswamy, Christopher Cann, Melina Khan and Michael Loria**  
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump's ceasefire with Iran was on tenuous ground on April 9 after Israel launched its deadliest day of strikes on Lebanon yet and Tehran vowed not to desert its allies.

A day after announcing the Iran war ceasefire, Trump took to social media to warn the country that if the "REAL AGREEMENT" was not complied with, all U.S. military assets would remain in place ready for a military response.

He warned Iran to keep the Strait of Hormuz open and safe but did not address the strikes in Lebanon in the post.

"If for any reason it is not, which is highly unlikely, then the "Shootin' Starts," bigger, and better, and stronger than anyone has ever seen before," he wrote.

Meanwhile, strikes on Lebanon, which borders Israel came on April 8, a day after United States and Iranian leaders announced a break in hostilities to hold peace talks and for oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz to resume, a key breakthrough in the agreement. But in the wake of Trump's announcement, parties involved were soon at odds over whether the break in fighting included Lebanon.

"The Iran-U.S. Ceasefire terms are clear and explicit: the U.S. must choose - ceasefire or continued war via Israel. It cannot have both," Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said in a statement as bombs hit Beirut.

### 'We will not leave Lebanon alone'

On April 8, Israel carried out its largest bombardment of Lebanon since the start of the war, killing over 250 people, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry. While Hezbollah initially halted fire following the announcement of the ceasefire, it has since responded to the Israeli attacks by firing rockets at northern Israel.

Israeli strikes killed between 180 and 260 people and left around 1,000 people wounded in Lebanon on April 8, local authorities reported.

The death toll in the country bordering Israel is the highest yet for a single day of the war. Lebanon's health ministry reported 182 deaths. The country's civil defense service reported 254. The two authorities reported around 1,000 people injured.

Beirut saw the worst of the strikes. Israeli strikes killed 91 people in Lebanon's capital city, the civil defense service said. Residents said attacks came without warnings to evacuate. Videos shared by reporters of strikes on Lebanon's capital city show rubble sent flying as buildings were destroyed.

Authorities in Tehran have posted fliers in stations in the city's train system vowing that the country "will not leave Lebanon alone," Iranian state media reported.

### Hassett: Iran to allow more ships

The White House said the strait has

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## RI House votes to allow clergy sex abuse victims to sue diocese

**Katherine Gregg**  
Providence Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK

For the second year in a row, the House has approved a bill to allow victims of sexual abuse by clergy to sue the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence and any other entity that knew, but failed to stop - or concealed - the abuse they suffered as children.

The legislation would also provide the victims with a two-year window to revive claims currently barred by expired time limits.

The vote was 67-to-5 along party lines, after one lawmaker after another expressed their disgust at the decades of abuse of children by trusted clergy who, in the words of Rep. Teresa Tanzi, had been told were their mortal "connection to God."

The legislation sponsored by Rep. Carol McEntee reflects one of several legislative actions that Attorney General Peter Neronha recommended in his scathing report on the sexual molestation of more than 300 Rhode Island children by at least 75 Catholic clergymen and the culture of secrecy that surrounded these crimes.

"Read it," McEntee told colleagues. "This report documents decades of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church and concluded that church leaders systematically protected accused priests and prioritized the institution's reputation over the safety and protection of children.

"They failed to report abuse to the authorities. They failed to properly investigate and they shuffled abusive priests around to unknowing and unsuspecting parishes where they would

... once more abuse children. The report makes it clear that these actions of church leaders was knowing and intentional.

"It's yet another example of people in powerful places abusing children for their own gratification and failing to own it ... Please send a message today that we value our children over the institutions that enable these pedophiles. Give the survivors a chance at justice," she said.

The Rhode Island House approved the same bill last year on a 67-to-5 party line vote but it died for lack of action by the Senate amid stated concerns about the legality of allowing civil suits now to recover damages for long-ago crimes against children.

McEntee, the House Judiciary chair,

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