



Mayor of Providence

Brett P. Smiley

Executive Order 2026-4
July 16, 2026

Protecting Voter Rights and Election Integrity

WHEREAS, Free, fair and accessible elections are the foundation of democratic government and are essential to maintaining public confidence in our institutions; and

WHEREAS, The City of Providence is committed to ensuring that every eligible voter is able to exercise the right to vote without intimidation, discrimination or unnecessary barriers, consistent with the United States Constitution, the Rhode Island Constitution, the Voting Rights Act, the National Voter Registration Act and all applicable state and federal law; and

WHEREAS, Clearly marked boundaries, accessible polling places and transparent election procedures promote public confidence, reduce confusion among voters, campaign workers and election officials and help ensure that every eligible voter is able to cast a ballot free from intimidation or interference; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island state law prohibits US Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees, agents, or officials from entering or remaining within two hundred feet (200') of any polling place at which voting is being conducted in order to protect eligible voters from intimidation and to maintain public trust in elections; and

WHEREAS, Recent requests and communications from federal agencies to other communities concerning election administration have created anxiety for local governments regarding the appropriate handling of election-related information and interactions with federal officials; and

WHEREAS, The City has an obligation to safeguard personally identifiable information entrusted to it, to protect confidential government records and to ensure that City employees respond consistently and lawfully to requests from outside governmental entities; and

WHEREAS, The City further recognizes that Rhode Island's election system vests primary authority for the administration of elections in the Rhode Island Board of Elections and local Boards of Canvassers, and nothing in this Executive Order is intended to interfere with those responsibilities or with any federal authority exercised pursuant to applicable law.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Brett P. Smiley, Mayor of the City of Providence, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Providence Home Rule Charter and the laws of the State of Rhode Island, hereby order as follows:

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Executive Order is to establish uniform procedures governing how City departments respond to election-related inquiries from federal agencies, safeguard voter privacy, protect public confidence in elections and ensure that all City actions are consistent with applicable state and federal law.

2. Compliance with Law

All City departments shall comply with applicable state and federal law.

No City department or employee shall voluntarily disclose election-related records, voter information or other protected information beyond what is required by law. Any requests for such information will be immediately transmitted to the Office of the City Solicitor. Election-related request means any written demand from a governmental entity seeking records, data, or assistance concerning the administration of voter registration, balloting, polling places, tabulation, canvassing, or certification.

Nothing in this Executive Order shall prohibit compliance with:

- A valid court order;
- Obligations expressly imposed by federal or state statute; or
- Directives issued by the Rhode Island Department of State, the Rhode Island Board of Elections, the Providence Board of Canvassers or any other governmental entity possessing lawful authority over election administration.

Nothing in this order shall be construed to restrict or interfere with the execution of lawful judicial warrants or the enforcement of criminal law, nor as limiting the rights of any person or entity under state or federal law.

3. Centralized Legal Review

Any election-related request, inquiry, demand or communication received from any federal agency, including but not limited to the United States Department of Justice or the Department of Homeland Security, shall immediately be referred to the Office of the City Solicitor before any substantive response is provided.

No City employee shall independently negotiate, interpret or respond to such requests unless specifically authorized by the City Solicitor.

The City Solicitor shall determine the legal authority supporting any request before authorizing the disclosure of records or the provision of assistance by any City department.

4. Protection of Voter Information

City departments shall safeguard personally identifiable information relating to voters and election administration to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Before releasing any records containing voter information, the Office of the City Solicitor shall determine:

- Whether the City possesses legal authority to disclose the requested records;
- Whether disclosure is required by law;
- Whether confidential, exempt or protected information must be withheld or redacted; and
- Whether the request exceeds the legal authority of the requesting agency.

5. Use of City Resources

No City funds, personnel or equipment shall be used to assist federal election investigations, voter list maintenance activities or election enforcement efforts except:

- Where expressly required by law;
- Pursuant to a valid judicial order; or
- As authorized by the Office of the City Solicitor after determining that such assistance is legally required.

Nothing in this section shall prohibit City departments from providing routine municipal services necessary for the safe and orderly conduct of elections.

6. Protection Against Voter Intimidation

The City Solicitor shall update Law Department staff guidance related to responding to federal immigration enforcement activities near polling places and assign legal support to each polling place.

The Mayor's Center for City Services shall develop an Election Hotline protocol to ensure a timely response to resident reports of voter intimidation or immigration enforcement activities at polling places.

City employees shall conduct themselves in a manner that promotes public confidence in elections and protects the rights of all eligible voters.

No City employee acting within the scope of employment shall engage in conduct intended to intimidate, discourage or interfere with any eligible person's right to register or vote.

City departments shall promptly report credible allegations of voter intimidation occurring on City property to the appropriate election officials and law enforcement agencies.

7. Polling Place Access and Electioneering Boundaries

The Administration shall work collaboratively with the Providence Board of Canvassers, the Rhode Island Board of Elections and other appropriate election officials to promote safe, orderly and accessible voting at all polling places within the City.

To the extent permitted by law and within available resources, City departments shall:

- Assist in ensuring that the fifty-foot (50') electioneering boundary established by Rhode Island law is clearly identified at polling places through highly visible signage, pavement markings or other appropriate means.

- Support compliance with Rhode Island general law 17-19-55 prohibiting U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees, agents, or officials from entering or remaining within two hundred feet (200') of any polling place at which voting is being conducted.
- Maintain clear and accessible pedestrian routes to polling places located on City property, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and applicable accessibility standards.
- Coordinate with election officials, the City Solicitor, and the Providence Police Department to respond to credible reports of voter intimidation, unlawful electioneering, harassment or interference with access to polling places while respecting the constitutional rights of all individuals.
- Provide public information, as appropriate, regarding voter rights, polling place access and applicable electioneering restrictions to reduce confusion and promote orderly elections.
- Station Providence Police at all polling places to ensure compliance with all policies within this Executive Order, and to ensure public safety and enforcement of applicable laws.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the authority of the Rhode Island Board of Elections, the Providence Board of Canvassers or any election official acting pursuant to Rhode Island law.

8. Transparency

Unless prohibited by law, the City shall publicly disclose significant federal requests relating to election administration received by City departments, together with the legal basis for the City's response.

9. Cooperation with Election Officials

The City shall continue to provide municipal services requested by the Rhode Island Board of Elections and the Providence Board of Canvassers to ensure elections are conducted safely, efficiently and in accordance with law.

10. Effective Date

This Executive Order shall take effect immediately upon execution.

So Ordered:


 Brett P. Smiley, Mayor