



Portsmouth Democratic Town Committee

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT REFORM CAUCUS HOUSE RULES CHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Portsmouth Democratic Town Committee finds the following facts and circumstances:

1. The current legislative process in the Rhode Island House of Representatives is widely acknowledged to have issues with transparency and bottlenecks, particularly in the frantic closing days of the session.
2. With the new term in the general assembly, there is an opportunity to enact changes to the House rules to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the process.
3. A group of representatives, the “Reform Caucus,” — which includes two Portsmouth legislators, Susan Donovan (D-69) and Terri Cortvriend (D-72) — has proposed a package of rules changes to address these issues.
 4. The four proposed Reform Caucus rules changes are:
 - a. Rules may be suspended only by a 2/3 majority vote. (Prevents the automatic flood of bills at the close of the legislative session.)
 - b. Proposed Substitute Amendments shall be posted online, and made available to the public for 48 hours prior to any vote in committee, or on the floor. (Enforces the same requirements for public notice that all other local governments are held to.)
 - c. Every bill introduced during year one of legislative term shall remain before the body for consideration in the second and final year of term. (Saves time for the legislature, minimizes impact on citizens who currently have to make multiple trips to testify on the same bills in both years.)
 - d. Any prime sponsor of a bill would be allowed to circulate a separate discharge petition. If the sponsor gathered 38 or more signatures on the petition, then the bill would be brought up through the regular committee hearing process. The committee would vote to either recommend that the full house pass or send to the floor without recommendation. The committee would not be able to hold the bill for further study. Then the bill would proceed to the floor for a vote. Importantly, the sponsor of the bill could obtain signatures for the discharge petition in the normal course of business. The petition would not have to “sit on the desk” which is the current rule. (Allows a majority to force a vote on bills currently bottled up in committee.)
5. These rules changes would fix serious, ongoing issues with the democratic process in the House.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Portsmouth Democratic Town Committee hereby calls upon all members of the General Assembly, in particular those representing Portsmouth, to support the Reform Caucus rules changes, advocate for them during the Rules Committee process, and vote for them in committee and on the floor.

LET IT BE KNOWN that this resolution was passed and adopted by the Portsmouth Democratic Town Committee on the 3rd day of January, 2019.