



Bryant University

Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership

*Rhode Island Voting Survey*

*For*

*The Hassenfeld Institute  
for Public Leadership*

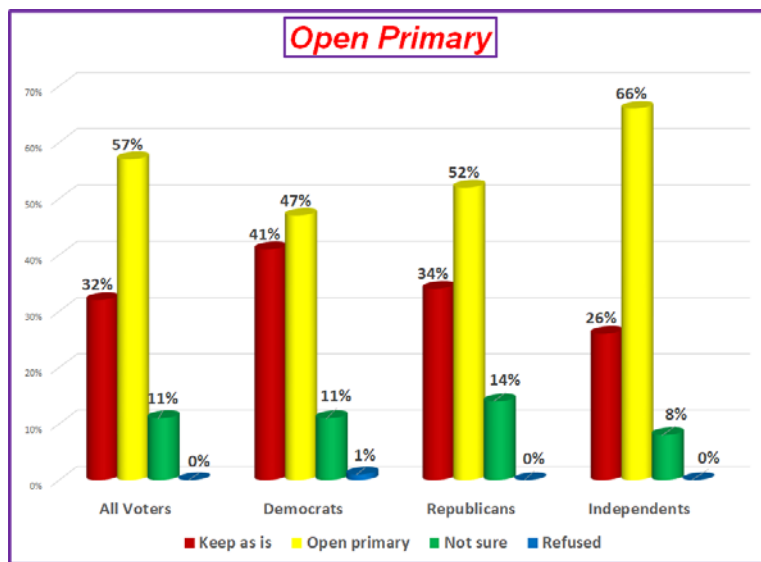
*May, 2022*

Fleming & Associates  
Cumberland, Rhode Island

## *Highlights of Findings*

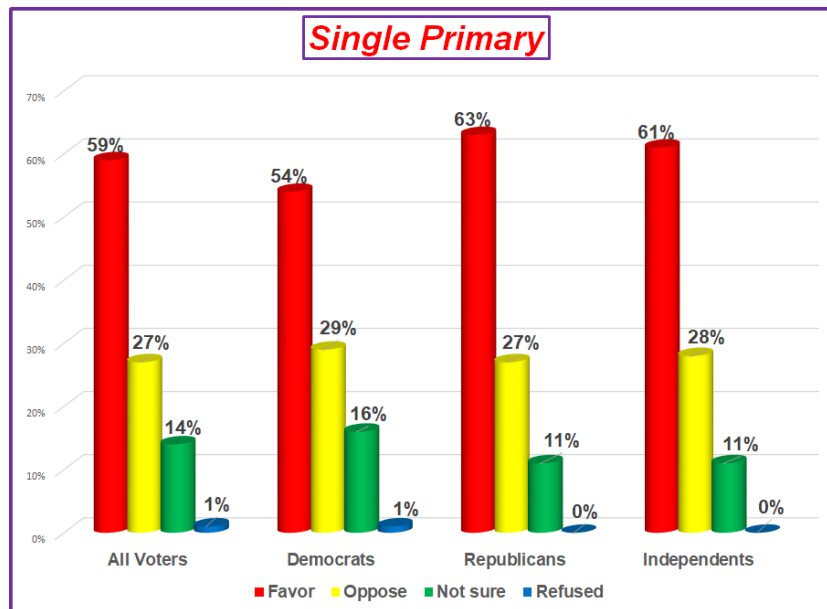
- Findings:
  - Rhode Island voters are open to changing the ways elections are conducted in the State.
  - Eight out of ten voters are aware of the way Rhode Island's primaries are conducted.
  - A majority of Rhode Island voters favor moving to an open primary, with the strongest support coming from Independent voters.
  - Voters favor a primary where all the candidates run together and the top two vote getters move on to the general election.
  - Voters are divided on if a candidate needs to receive a majority of votes in order to win the election.
  - Most Rhode Island voters have not heard of Rank Choice Voting. When explained what it is, they oppose it.
  - Voters strongly support making Election Day a federal holiday, same day voter registration and early voting.
  - Voters are divided on support for eliminating witnesses or notary requirements on mail ballots with strong support from Democrats and strong opposition from Republicans.
  
- Seventy-nine percent of voters said that they are aware of the rules for voting in primaries in Rhode Island while 18% said they did not and 3% were not sure. (Q.8).
  - Eighty-five percent males said they are aware while 74% of females are aware.
  - Eighty-four percent of CD 2 voters are aware.
  - Eighty-two percent of Democrats are aware and 77% of Independent voters are aware.
  - Twenty-five percent of Republicans are not aware.
  - Eighty-six percent of voters who vote in primaries are aware.
  - Eighty-six percent of voters over the age of 60 are aware of the rules for primary voting.

- **OPEN PRIMARY:** Fifty-seven percent of voters said that they are in favor of moving to an Open Primary in Rhode Island while 32% said to keep it the same and 11% are not sure on the question (Q.9).
  - There is no difference with the sexes on this question with 57% supporting the Open Primary.
  - In CD 1 36% want to keep it the way it is and 54% want to move to an Open Primary while in CD 2, 28% want to keep it the way it is and 60% want to move to an Open Primary.
  - Sixty-one percent of voters under the age of 60 want to move to an Open Primary.
  - Voters over the age of 60 are more divided with 38% wanting to keep it the way it is and 48% wanting to move to an Open Primary.
  - Democrats are divided with 41% wanting to keep it as is and 47% moving to an Open Primary.
  - Sixty-six percent of Independent voters want to move to an Open Primary.
  - Fifty-two percent of Republican voters want to move to an Open Primary while 34% want to keep it the same.
  - Fifty-five percent of voters who vote in primaries favor moving to an Open Primary.
  - The strongest support for an Open Primary comes from voters who earn under \$75K.

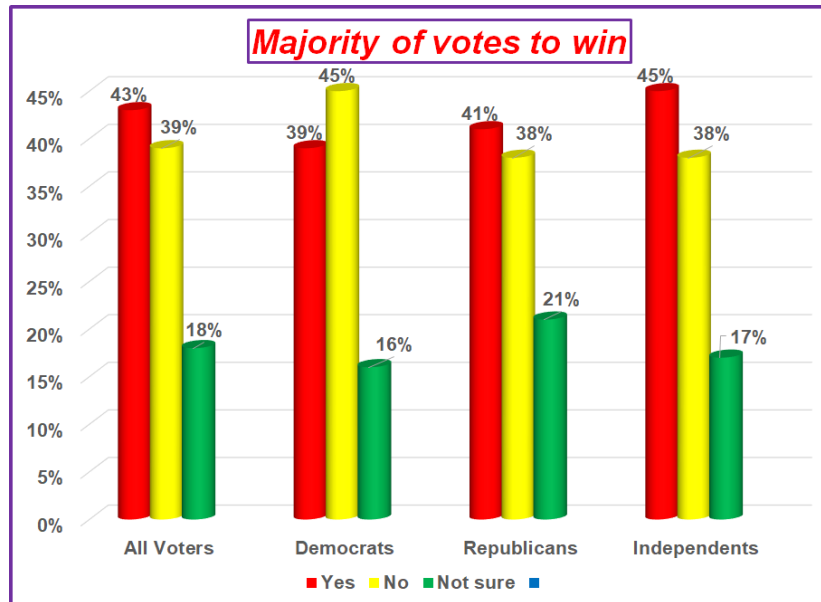


- **SINGLE PRIMARY:** Rhode Island voters were asked if they would favor or oppose a primary where all the candidates would appear on one ballot. All voters are eligible to participate and vote for who they like and the top two vote getters would advance to the November Election. Fifty-nine percent of voters said that they are in favor of moving to this type of primary while 27% said they would oppose it and 14% are not sure on the question (Q.10).
  - Sixty percent of males favor a single primary while 58% of females favor it.
  - There is no difference in the Congressional districts on this issue.
  - Sixty-two percent of votes between the ages of 40 and 59 favor the single primary.

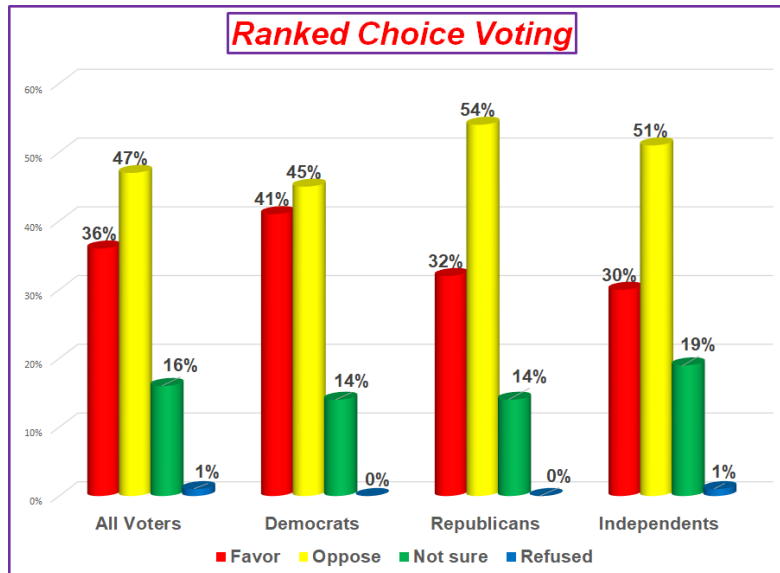
- Sixty-three percent of Republican voters favor the single primary and 61% of Independent voters.
- Among Democrats, 54% favor the open primary and 29% oppose it.
- Sixty-eight percent of voters who do not vote in primaries favor the open primary while 56% of voters who vote in primaries favor the open primary.
- The strongest support for a single primary comes from voters who earn under \$75K.



- **MAJORITY TO WIN:** Voters are divided when they were asked if they would support a system where a candidate needs to receive at least 50% of the vote to win the election compared to the current system where the winning candidate only has to receive the largest number of votes. Forty-three percent of voters said they support having a majority of votes to win while 39% said they do not and 18% are not sure on the question (Q.11).
  - Forty-seven percent of males favor this while 40% oppose it.
  - Among females 39% support it and 39% oppose it with 22% not sure on the question.
  - In CD 1, 47% favor the candidate having the majority to win.
  - In CD 2, 39% favor it while 43% oppose it.
  - Voters over the age of 60 are divided with 36% favoring it and 36% opposing it.
  - Forty-six percent of voters between the ages of 40 and 59 favor it while 41% oppose it.
  - **Forty-five percent of Democrats oppose it while 39% favor it and among Republicans 41% favor it and 38% oppose it.**
  - Forty-five percent of Independent voters favor it and 38% oppose it.
  - Fifty-three percent of voters who earn between \$100K and \$200K favor it.

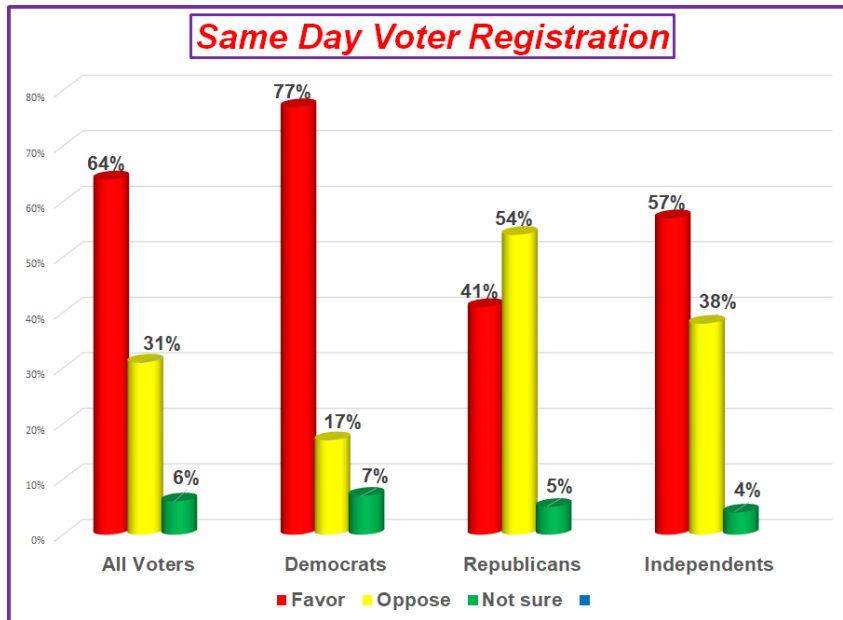


- **HEARD OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING:** Three out of ten voters in Rhode Island have heard of ranked choice voting. Thirty percent of voters said have heard of it while 67% said they have not and 3% are not sure on the question (Q.12).
  - The sub groups that have heard about it were: voters under 40, 34%, Democrats, 41%, CD 2 voters, 36% and those who earn over \$200K, 40%.
  
- **SUPPORT FOR RANKED CHOICE VOTING:** Rhode Island voters oppose ranked choice voting by 11%. Thirty-six percent of voters support ranked choice voting while 47% said they oppose it and 16% are not sure on the question (Q.13).
  - Fifty percent of males oppose it while 35% support it.
  - Among female voters 45% oppose it and 37% support it.
  - Voters under the age of 40 favor ranked choice voting (44%) compared to 34% who oppose it.
  - Fifty-seven percent of voters over the age of 60 oppose it while 27% support it.
  - Democratic voters oppose it 45% to 41%.
  - Among Republicans 54% oppose it and 32% support it
  - Independent voters oppose the ranked choice voting 51% to 30%.
  - Fifty percent of voters who vote in primaries oppose the ranked choice voting.

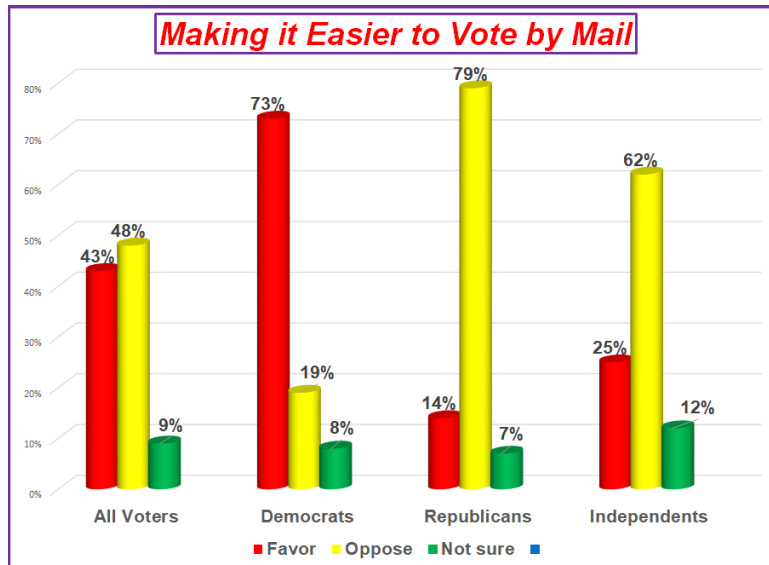


- **SUPPORT FOR MAKING ELECTION DAY A FEDERAL HOLIDAY:** Three out of four Rhode Island voters favor making Election Day a federal holiday. Seventy-five percent said they favor it while 20% said they oppose it and 5% are not sure on the question (Q.14a).
  - Among the sexes, 70% of males favor making it a holiday and 79% of females favor it.
  - Eighty-one percent of voters under the age of 40 favor it and 75% of voters between the ages of 40 and 59 favor it.
  - Among voters 60 and older 70% favor it and 24% oppose it.
  - **Eighty-three percent of Democrats favor it.**
  - Sixty-six percent of Republicans favor it while 29% oppose it.
  - Among Independent voters 72% favor it and 23% oppose it.
  - Voters who earn between \$25K and \$75K, (80%) and those who earn over \$200K, (81%) are the strongest supporters of this.
  
- **SAME DAY VOTER REGISTRATION:** Sixty-four percent of voters support same day voter registration while 31% said they oppose it and 6% are not sure on the question (Q.14b).
  - Seventy percent of female voters favor same day registration and 26% oppose it.
  - Males support it less than females with 57% supporting same day registration and 37% opposing it.
  - In the Congressional districts the strongest support comes from CD 1 with 67% favoring it and in CD 2, 60% favoring it.
  - Young voters are the strongest supporters of this with 77% favoring it.
  - Among voters over the age of 60, 53% favor it and 38% oppose it.
  - Seventy-seven percent of Democrats favor it while 17% oppose it.

- **Fifty-four percent of Republicans oppose the same day registration while 41% favor it.**
- Fifty-seven percent of Independent voters favor it while 38% oppose it.
- In all income groups more than 63% support same day registration.

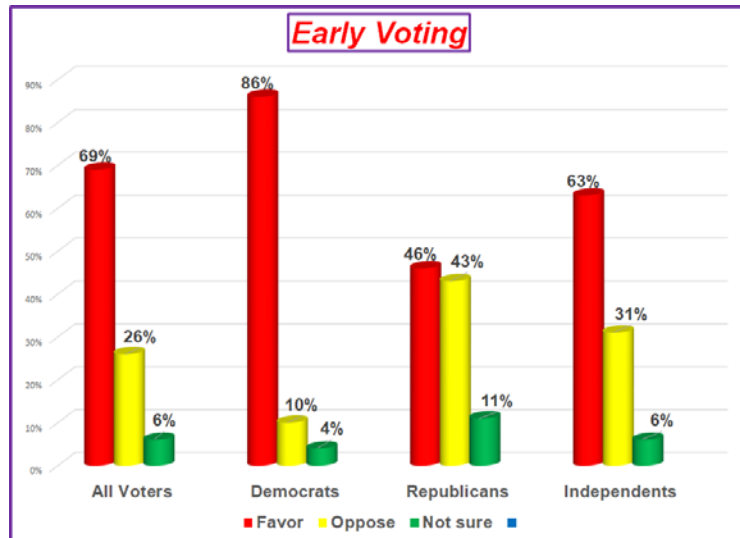


- **ELIMINATING WITNESSES OR NOTARY ON MAIL BALLOTS:** Rhode Island voters are divided on this issue. Forty-three percent favor eliminating witnesses signature on mail ballots while 48% said they oppose it and 9% are not sure on the question (Q.14c).
  - **There is a difference among the sexes on this issue with 53% of males opposing it and 37% favoring it while among female voters 48% favor it and 43% oppose it.**
  - Voters under the age of 40 favor the issue with 48% favoring it and 42% opposing it.
  - Fifty percent of voters between the ages of 40 and 59 oppose it and 44% support it.
  - Among voters over the age of 60, 40% support it and 48% oppose it.
  - **Democrats are the strongest supporters of it with 73% of Democrats favoring it while 19% oppose it.**
  - **Republicans strongly oppose it, with 79% of Republicans opposing it and 14% supporting it.**
  - Sixty-two percent of Independent voters oppose it while 26% support it.
  - A majority of voters who earn between \$25K and \$200K oppose it.



- **EARLY VOTING:** Two-thirds of Rhode Island voters support early voting beginning 20 days before the election. Sixty-nine percent of voters support early voting while 26% said they oppose it and 6% are not sure on the question (Q.14d).
  - Seventy-six percent of females support early voting compared to 60% of males.
  - Seventy-one percent of voters in CD 2 support early voting.
  - Seventy-three percent of voters between the ages of 40 and 59 favor early voting.
  - **Eighty-six percent of Democrats favor early voting.**
  - **Republicans are divided on the question with 46% favoring it and 43% opposing it.**
  - Sixty-three percent of Independent voters favor early voting while 31% oppose it.
  - Seventy-six percent of voters who earn between \$25K and \$75K favor early voting and 81% of voters who earn over \$200K favor early voting.





• **DEMOCRATS:**

- Open Primary: Keep as is 41%, Open Primary 47%
- Single Primary: Favor 54%, Oppose 29%
- Majority Vote Favor 39%, Oppose 45%
- Ranked Choice Favor 41%, Oppose 45%
- Federal Holiday Favor 83%, Oppose 12%
- Same Day Registration Favor 77%, Oppose 17%
- Mail Ballots Favor 73%, Oppose 19%
- Early Voting Favor 86%, Oppose 10%

• **REPUBLICANS:**

- Open Primary: Keep as is 34%, Open Primary 52%
- Single Primary: Favor 63%, Oppose 27%
- Majority Vote Favor 41%, Oppose 38%
- Ranked Choice Favor 32%, Oppose 54%
- Federal Holiday Favor 66%, Oppose 29%
- Same Day Registration Favor 41%, Oppose 54%
- Mail Ballots Favor 14%, Oppose 79%
- Early Voting Favor 46%, Oppose 43%

• **INDEPENDENTS:**

- Open Primary: Keep as is 26%, Open Primary 66%
- Single Primary: Favor 61%, Oppose 28%
- Majority Vote Favor 45%, Oppose 38%
- Ranked Choice Favor 30%, Oppose 51%
- Federal Holiday Favor 72%, Oppose 23%
- Same Day Registration Favor 57%, Oppose 38%
- Mail Ballots Favor 26%, Oppose 62%
- Early Voting Favor 63%, Oppose 31%