



State of Vermont
Office of the Secretary of State
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Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Secretary of State
S. Lauren Hibbert, Deputy Secretary

April 9, 2026

To: Hon. Martin LaLonde, Chair, House Committee on Judiciary

From: Sarah Copeland Hanzas, Secretary of State

Re: S.209 – An act relating to standards for law enforcement identification

Dear Representative LaLonde and House Judiciary Members,

Thank you for hearing from my office on S.209 and for the diligent work you have done on this bill.

I am asking that polling locations be included in the list of sensitive locations where a civil arrest would be prohibited. Voting is a fundamental right for citizens, and the smooth operation of elections is essential to maintaining all Vermonters' right to vote.

My office has heard from hundreds of Vermonters who are concerned about law enforcement being at polling locations. Their concern is well-founded. As the nation ramps up to the 2026 midterms, the President or others in his administration have said that they are considering sending federal law enforcement, including immigration agents, to polling locations. In some instances, this has also included the National Guard.

City and town clerks around the state have also raised concerns with our office. They have heard directly from their constituents about this issue. Additionally, clerks are deeply concerned about election procedures, protocols, and practices.

There is a long-standing policy, supported by federal and state law, that prohibits law enforcement from being deployed at polling locations. The federal law was passed in 1865. Stemming from lessons in the Civil War, the law was enacted because law enforcement, including federal law enforcement or federal troops, in polling locations risked being perceived as voter intimidation or abused by those in power.

States run elections. Vermont election officials have strong relationships with local law enforcement. Our local law enforcement understands the Vermont laws on this topic. If an active crime occurs, Vermont clerks and Boards of Civil Authority know how to contact local law enforcement.

As a democracy, we have a responsibility to run free, fair, secure, and accurate elections. My office wants all eligible voters to be able to cast their ballot without fear. This bill will build voters' faith that Vermont respects and upholds their fundamental right to vote without interference. Additionally, this important legislation provides more legal protection to the entire voting process.

If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to my office.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Copeland Hanzas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sarah" being the most prominent.

Sarah Copeland Hanzas
Secretary of State