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For Immediate Release

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**Rep. Kane announces passage of bill to temporarily postpone
municipal elections during COVID-19 pandemic**

*March 31 special elections to fill House, Senate vacancies also
moved*

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) is supporting legislation that would allow communities to temporarily postpone upcoming municipal elections in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

On March 23rd, the House of Representatives and the Senate enacted Senate Bill 2608, which authorizes cities and towns to move municipal elections previously scheduled for May 30 or earlier to a new date, provided the election takes place prior to June 30th. Representative Kane said granting municipalities the authority to reschedule local elections is necessary to protect the health and safety of voters, poll workers and volunteers.

Communities that choose to delay their local elections will be required to post the vote authorizing the change of date and a sample ballot on their official municipal website at least 20 days prior to the rescheduled election, and to take other reasonable steps to notify voters of the date change. New voters will be allowed to register up to 10 days prior to the election.

To encourage voter participation, Senate Bill 2608 provides for both absentee and early voting. Absentee ballots will be accepted until noon on the last business day immediately preceding the rescheduled election date. Qualifying voters who wish to vote early by mail can file an application with their local election official requesting an early voting ballot. The bill also contains provisions allowing elected municipal officials whose terms would otherwise have expired to continue to serve until the new election takes place and a successor is elected and qualified.

Senate Bill 2608 is now on Governor Charlie Baker's desk awaiting his signature.

Rep Kane has also been advocating for H.4572, *An Act to address challenges in town governance resulting from COVID-19*, filed in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This legislation would give flexibility to towns to declare a 30-day postponement of a Town Meeting due to a "public health emergency" and to accommodate extending the date of Town Meeting beyond the existing statutory cut-off of June 30th. It would also allow quorum to be reduced as a short-term measure to permit the most pressing business occur with a reduced number in

attendance and allow towns that are unable to finalize a budget before the start of the new fiscal year to continue month-to-month spending on essential operations at the same level as the fiscal year just ended. The bill is currently under consideration in the House.

In related action, the House and Senate today adopted separate orders to postpone four special elections to fill vacancies in their respective branches. All four special elections had previously been scheduled to take place on March 31.

The Senate moved the special elections for the Second Hampden & Hampshire and the Plymouth & Barnstable Districts to May 19, while the House postponed the special elections for the Thirty-Seventh Middlesex and the Third Bristol Districts until June 2.

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