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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- GENERAL PROVISIONS

Introduced By: Representative Alex S. Finkelman

Date Introduced: February 05, 2025

Referred To: House Finance

(Board of Elections)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 17-1-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-1 entitled "General
2 Provisions" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **17-1-2. Definitions.**

4 For the purposes this title, except as may otherwise be required by the context:

5 (1) "Election" means the filling of any public office or the determination of any public
6 question by vote of the electorate, and includes without limitation any state, town, or city office or
7 question, and any political party primary election for the nomination of any candidate for public
8 office; except that it shall not include a financial town meeting or a meeting to elect officers of a
9 fire, water, or sewer district;

10 (2) "Election official" means any person employed in the administration or conduct of
11 elections by the state board, board of canvassers or any poll worker, or within the elections division
12 of the secretary of state. In determining the number of days served by a retired election official the
13 total number of days served in any year in which a general election is held, as defined in this section,
14 may be combined for any one year in which a general election is held;

15 ~~(2)~~(3) "General election" means an election held on the first Tuesday next after the first
16 Monday in November in even numbered years for the election of members of the general assembly
17 and/or for the election of general officers, and/or for the election of presidential electors for
18 president/vice-president of the United States;

19 ~~(3)~~(4) "General officer" means an officer designated as a general officer by chapter 2 of

1 this title;

2 ~~(4)~~(5) “Independent candidate” means a candidate who has no affiliation with any political
3 party;

4 ~~(5)~~(6) “Local board” means a town or city board of canvassers, board of canvassers and
5 registration, canvassing authority, or any other local board, commission, or officer empowered by
6 law to have custody of the permanent registration records;

7 ~~(6)~~(7) “Local election” means any election limited to the electorate of any city or town, or
8 any part, at which any city, town, ward, or district officers are to be chosen, or any elective meeting
9 at which a question is to be submitted to the voters of a city, town, or any subdivision of a city or
10 town, but it shall not include a financial town meeting;

11 ~~(7)~~(8) “Party member” means any person who is a member of a designated political party
12 pursuant to § 17-9.1-23;

13 ~~(8)~~(9) “Party voter” means any qualified voter who is eligible to vote at the primary election
14 of a political party;

15 ~~(9)~~(10) “Political party” or “party” means: (i) any political organization which, at the next
16 preceding general election for the election of general officers, nominated a candidate for governor,
17 and whose candidate for governor at the election polled at least five percent (5%) of the entire vote
18 cast in the state for governor, or (ii) any political organization which at the next preceding general
19 election for the election of a president of the United States nominated a candidate for president and
20 whose candidate for president at the election polled at least five percent (5%) of the entire vote cast
21 in the state for president, or (iii) any political organization which, on petition forms provided to the
22 chairperson of the organization by the state board of elections, obtains the signatures and addresses
23 of that number of registered qualified voters equal to five percent (5%) of the entire vote cast in the
24 state for governor or president in the immediately preceding general election. All the signatures
25 must be obtained no earlier than January 1 of the year in which the political organization desires to
26 place a candidate or candidates on any ballot as a “party” candidate. If the political organization
27 wishes to select its nominees in a primary election, the petitions, bearing the requisite number of
28 valid signatures, shall be presented to the appropriate local boards of canvassers no later than June
29 1 of the same year. If the petitions are validated by the local boards as containing the requisite
30 number of valid signatures, the political organization shall be deemed to be a political party for all
31 elections held during the year and may select its nominees in a primary election. If the political
32 organization does not wish to select its nominees in a primary election, then the petitions need not
33 be returned to local boards of canvassers until August 1 of the same year. An organization
34 qualifying as a political party through the petition process shall qualify as a political party only

1 during the year in which signatures are obtained unless the candidates for governor or president of
2 the United States of the party at a general election held in the year, shall receive five percent (5%)
3 of the vote as provided in this subdivision for either governor or president of the United States. If
4 the candidates do not receive five percent (5%) of the vote, the organization shall no longer qualify
5 as a political party unless and until it shall, in a subsequent year, once again qualify by the
6 submission of petitions;

7 ~~(10)~~(11) "Polling place" means the room in which any election or elective meeting is
8 conducted;

9 ~~(11)~~(12) "Primary election" means any election to select the candidates of a political party;

10 ~~(12)~~(13) "Proposition" or "public question" means any question put to a referendum of the
11 electorate of the entire state or any part of it;

12 ~~(13)~~(14) "Qualified voter" means any person who is eligible to vote under the requirements
13 of age, residence, and citizenship prescribed by the state constitution and who is duly registered to
14 vote, or who is exempt from registration, pursuant to this title, and who is not otherwise disqualified
15 as a voter pursuant to law;

16 ~~(14)~~(15) "Special election" means any election other than a local election or primary
17 election which is not held on a general election day;

18 ~~(15)~~(16) "State board" means the state board of elections constituted pursuant to this title;

19 ~~(16)~~(17) "State election" means any election at which any presidential electors, senator or
20 representatives in congress, general officers of the state, or members of the general assembly are to
21 be chosen, or at which a public question or an amendment to the Constitution is submitted to the
22 electors of the state;

23 ~~(17)~~(18) "State officer" means the governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state,
24 attorney general, general treasurer, state senator, and state representative;

25 ~~(18)~~(19) "Vacancy in office" means the condition resulting from any failure to elect or
26 appoint an eligible and qualified person to public office, or the failure of any person duly elected
27 or appointed to qualify, or from the death, resignation, or removal of an incumbent prior to the
28 expiration of his or her term of office and where no fixed term is prescribed upon the death,
29 resignation, or removal;

30 ~~(19)~~(20) "Voting list" means the complete list of all voters prepared from the information
31 contained in the original permanent registration records in the possession of the local board of
32 canvassers;

33 ~~(20)~~(21) "Warden" includes "moderator" and vice versa;

34 ~~(21)~~(22) Words importing the masculine gender shall include the feminine gender.

1 SECTION 2. Chapter 17-7 of the General Laws entitled "State Board of Elections" is
2 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **17-7-6.1. Temporary service of election officials after retirement.**

4 (a) Any election official as defined pursuant to § 17-1-2, who has retired under the
5 provisions of any law of this state, may be temporarily employed at the state board for a period of
6 no more than ninety (90) days in any calendar year in which a general election is held for a statewide
7 office, or congressional district, or question, or any year in which a special election, as defined in
8 § 17-1-2, is held for a statewide office, or congressional district, or question, without any forfeiture
9 of, or reduction in, the retirement benefits and allowances the election official is receiving, or may
10 receive, as a retired election official. Notice of the employment shall be sent monthly to the state
11 retirement board by the state board employing the election official and by the retired election
12 official at the end of each temporary employment period.

13 (b) Any retired election official may be temporarily employed pursuant to subsection (a)
14 of this section, but in no event shall employment exceed ninety (90) days.

15 (c) The calculation of the ninety-day (90) period in any one year shall be determined by
16 either of the following methods:

17 (1) Seven (7) hours shall constitute a full day and the number of full days shall be limited
18 to ninety (90) days, which shall be the equivalent of ninety (90) full days; or

19 (2) Three and a half (3.5) hours shall constitute a half day and the number of half days shall
20 be limited to one hundred eighty (180) half days, which shall be the equivalent of ninety (90) full
21 days.

22 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- GENERAL PROVISIONS

1 This act would allow retired election officials to work for the state board of elections on a
2 temporary basis in any year in which a statewide, congressional or referendum general election is
3 held.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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