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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- PROCEDURE GENERALLY --
CAUSES OF ACTION

Introduced By: Representatives Shanley, Potter, and Craven

Date Introduced: February 12, 2026

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 9-1 of the General Laws entitled "Causes of Action" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **9-1-55. Punitive damages in civil actions.**

4 (a) In any civil action including, but not limited to, causes of action brought under chapter
5 7 of title 10 ("death by wrongful act"), the plaintiff may receive an award for punitive damages if
6 evidence is submitted showing the actions of the defendant constitute willful or wanton conduct or
7 that the defendant acted with reckless disregard for the health safety and welfare of persons who
8 foreseeably might be harmed by said reckless, willful or wanton conduct.

9 (b) For purposes of this section and its application to any civil action, "willful or wanton
10 conduct" means conduct committed which the actor knew or should have known was dangerous or
11 was done heedlessly and recklessly and without regard to consequences or the rights and safety of
12 others.

13 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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- 1 This act would provide for punitive damages in civil actions where there is willful or
2 wanton conduct or a reckless disregard for health, safety and welfare.
3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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