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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- GENERAL STATE OFFICERS -- NON-PARTISAN
ELECTION OF SECRETARY OF STATE

Introduced By: Representatives Newberry, Chippendale, Nardone, and Place

Date Introduced: February 12, 2026

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

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

3 **17-2-1. General officers enumerated — Election and terms.**

4 The governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney general, and general
5 treasurer shall be known as general officers. They shall be elected at a general election,
6 quadrennially, in accordance with the provisions of this title, and shall hold their respective offices
7 for four (4) years beginning on the first Tuesday of January next succeeding their election and until
8 the election and qualification of their respective successors. [Commencing with the election to be
9 held in 2030, the secretary of state shall be elected in a non-partisan election, without any party
10 label, and is not to be nominated or elected as an official representative of a political party.](#)

11 SECTION 2. Section 17-12-13 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-12 entitled "Party
12 Committees and Conventions" is hereby amended to read as follows:

13 **17-12-13. State conventions.**

14 There shall be held not later than October 14 of every even year a state convention for each
15 political party. The nominees of a party for senator and for representatives in congress, for the five
16 (5) general offices, and for membership in the general assembly shall be delegates to the state
17 convention of that party. In presidential election years, these conventions shall select the party
18 nominees for presidential electors and their names shall be placed on the ballot for the forthcoming

1 election. [Commencing with the election to be held in 2030, the secretary of state shall be elected in](#)
2 [a non-partisan election, without any party label, and is not to be nominated or elected as an official](#)
3 [representative of a political party.](#)

4 SECTION 3. Section 17-14-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-14 entitled "Nomination
5 of Party and Independent Candidates" is hereby amended to read as follows:

6 **17-14-1. Declarations of candidacy.**

7 During the last consecutive Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in June in the even years
8 and during the thirty-ninth (39th) and fortieth (40th) days preceding a primary election for a special
9 election for state or local office, or for an election for state or local office regularly scheduled for a
10 time other than the biennial general statewide election, or during the sixty-seventh (67th) and sixty-
11 eighth (68th) days preceding a primary election for a special election for federal office, or for an
12 election for federal office regularly scheduled for a time other than the biennial general statewide
13 election, each voter desiring to be a candidate at the upcoming primary or an independent candidate
14 on final nomination papers shall, on a form that shall be provided by the secretary of state, file a
15 declaration of their candidacy not later than four o'clock (4:00) p.m. of the last day for the filing
16 with the secretary of state for congressional and statewide general offices, or with the local board
17 of the place of the candidate's voting residence for general assembly, or state committee or
18 senatorial and representative district committee, or with the appropriate local board for local
19 officers. The declaration shall be signed by the candidate as the candidate's name appears on the
20 voting list. The signature shall be accepted as valid if it can be reasonably identified to be the name
21 and signature of the voter it purports to be. A variation of the voter's signature by the insertion or
22 omission of identifying titles or by the substitution of initials for the first or middle names or both
23 shall not in itself be grounds for invalidation of the signature. The declaration shall also include the
24 following information:

25 (1) The candidate's name as it appears on the voting list, subject to the same provisions as
26 relate to the voter's signature on the declaration;

27 (2) The address as it appears on the voting list, provided that an address that is substantially
28 the same as the address on the voting list shall be valid;

29 (3) The party declaration if seeking to run in a party primary;

30 (4) The office sought;

31 (5) The place and date of birth;

32 (6) The length of residence in the state and in the town or city where the candidate resides;

33 (7) A certification that the candidate is neither serving a sentence, including probation or
34 parole, for which the candidate was imprisoned upon final conviction of a felony imposed on any

1 date nor serving any sentence, whether incarcerated or suspended, on probation or parole, upon
2 final conviction of a felony committed after November 5, 1986;

3 (8) A certification that the candidate has not been lawfully adjudicated to be non compos
4 mentis, of unsound mind;

5 (9) In the case of candidates for party nomination, a certification that the candidate has not
6 been a member of a political party other than the declared party within ninety (90) days of the filing
7 date, except in the case of candidates for party nomination for a special election for federal office,
8 or for an election for federal office regularly scheduled for a time other than the biennial general
9 statewide election, that person shall not have been a member of a political party other than the
10 declared political party within thirty (30) days of the filing of their declaration of candidacy; ~~and~~

11 (10) If a person is a candidate for a state or local office, a certification that the person has
12 not within the preceding three (3) years served any sentence, incarcerated or suspended, on
13 probation or parole, for a crime committed after November 5, 1986, upon a plea of nolo contendere
14 or guilty or upon a conviction of a felony or for a misdemeanor for which a sentence of
15 imprisonment for six (6) months or more, whether suspended or to be served was imposed; ~~and~~

16 (11) Commencing with the election to be held in 2030, the secretary of state shall be elected
17 in a non-partisan election, without any party label, and is not to be nominated or elected as an
18 official representative of a political party and shall follow the procedure set forth for independent
19 candidates set forth herein.

20 SECTION 4. Section 42-8-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 42-8 entitled "Department of
21 State" is hereby amended to read as follows:

22 **42-8-1. Head of department — Duties.**

23 (a) There shall be a department of state. The head of the department of state shall be the
24 secretary of state. The secretary of state shall perform the duties required by this chapter and by
25 chapter 2 of title 6; chapters 1 to 4, inclusive, of title 7; chapters 16, 19, and 20 of title 17; chapters
26 3 and 10 of title 22; chapters 1 to 3 and 4, of title 29; chapter 1 of title 36; chapter 7 of title 37;
27 chapter 30 of this title; chapters 1 and 2 of title 43; chapter 6 of title 44; and any and all other
28 provisions of the general laws and public laws insofar as such powers and duties relate to the
29 secretary of state and the department of state.

30 (b) Commencing with the election to be held in 2030, the attorney general shall be elected
31 in a non-partisan election, without any party label, and is not to be nominated or elected as an
32 official representative of a political party.

1 SECTION 5. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2030.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- GENERAL STATE OFFICERS -- NON-PARTISAN
ELECTION OF SECRETARY OF STATE

- 1 This act would provide for the non-partisan election of the secretary of state, commencing
2 with the 2030 election.
3 This act would take effect on January 1, 2030.

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