

2026 -- H 7977

=====
LC005594
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

—————
A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- BALLOT QUESTION ADVOCACY AND REPORTING

Introduced By: Representative Brian C. Newberry

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 17-25.2 of the General Laws entitled "Ballot Question Advocacy and
2 Reporting" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **17-25.2-7.1. Disclaimers.**

4 (a) No ballot question advocate shall make or incur an expenditure for any written, typed,
5 or other printed communication, unless such communication bears upon its face the words "Paid
6 for by" and the name of the person, entity, the name of its chief executive officer or equivalent, and
7 its principal business address. In the case of a person, business entity or political action committee
8 making or incurring such an expenditure, which entity is a tax-exempt organization under § 501(c)
9 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (other than an organization described in § 501(c)(3) of such
10 Code) or an exempt nonprofit as defined in § 17-25-3, or any subsequent corresponding internal
11 revenue code of the United States, as amended from time to time, or an organization organized
12 under Section 527 of said code, such communication shall also bear upon its face the words "Top
13 Five Donors" followed by a list of the five (5) persons or entities making the largest aggregate
14 donations to such person, business entity or political action committee during the twelve (12) month
15 period before the date of such communication; provided that, no donor shall be listed who is not
16 required to be disclosed in a report to the board of elections by the person, business entity, or
17 political action committee.

18 (b) The provisions of subsections (a) of this section shall not apply to:

19 (1) Any editorial, news story, or commentary published in any newspaper, magazine or

1 journal on its own behalf and upon its own responsibility and for which it does not charge or receive
2 any compensation whatsoever;

3 (2) Political paraphernalia including pins, buttons, badges, emblems, hats, bumper stickers
4 or other similar materials; or

5 (3) Signs or banners with a surface area of not more than thirty-two square feet (32 ft²).

6 (c) No person, business entity or political action committee shall make or incur an
7 expenditure for paid television advertising or paid Internet video advertising, unless at the end of
8 such advertising there appears simultaneously, for a period of not less than four (4) seconds:

9 (1) A clearly identifiable video, photographic or similar image of the entity's chief
10 executive officer or equivalent; and

11 (2) A personal audio message, in the following form: "I am (name of entity's chief
12 executive officer or equivalent), (title) of (entity), and I approved its content."

13 (3) In the case of a person, business entity or political action committee making or incurring
14 such an expenditure, which person, business entity or political action committee is a tax-exempt
15 organization under § 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (other than an organization
16 described in § 501(c)(3) of such Code) or an exempt nonprofit as defined in § 17-25-3, or any
17 subsequent corresponding internal revenue code if the United States, as amended from time to time,
18 or an organization organized under Section 527 of said code, such advertising shall also include a
19 written message in the following form: "The top five (5) donors to the organization responsible for
20 this advertisement are" followed by a list of the five (5) persons or entities making the largest
21 aggregate donations during the twelve (12) month period before the date of such advertisement;
22 provided that, no donor shall be listed who is not required to be disclosed in a report to the board
23 of elections by the person, business entity, or political action committee.

24 (d) No person, business entity or political action committee shall make or incur an
25 expenditure for paid radio advertising or paid Internet audio advertising, unless the advertising ends
26 with a personal audio statement by the entity's chief executive officer or equivalent:

27 (1) Identifying the entity paying for the expenditure; and

28 (2) A personal audio message, in the following form: "I am (name of entity's chief
29 executive officer or equivalent), (title), of (entity), and I approved its content."

30 (3) In the case of a person, business entity or political action committee making or incurring
31 such an expenditure, which entity is a tax-exempt organization under § 501(c) of the Internal
32 Revenue Code of 1986 (other than an organization described in § 501(c)(3) of such Code) or an
33 exempt nonprofit as defined in § 17-25-3, or any subsequent corresponding internal revenue code
34 of the United States, as amended from time to time, or an organization organized under Section 527

1 of said code, such advertising shall also include:

2 (i) An audio message in the following form: "The top five (5) donors to the organization
3 responsible for this advertisement are" followed by a list of the five (5) persons or entities making
4 the largest aggregate donations during the twelve (12) month period before the date of such
5 advertisement; provided that, no donor shall be listed who is not required to be disclosed in a report
6 to the board of elections by the person, business entity, or political action committee; or

7 (ii) In the case of such an advertisement that is thirty (30) seconds in duration or shorter,
8 an audio message providing a website address that lists such five (5) persons or entities, provided
9 that no contributor shall be listed who is not required to be disclosed in a report to the board of
10 elections by the person, business entity, or political action committee. In such case, the person,
11 business entity or political action committee shall establish and maintain such a website with such
12 listing for the entire period during which such person, business entity or political action committee
13 makes such advertisement.

14 (e) No person, business entity or political action committee shall make or incur an
15 expenditure for automated telephone calls, unless the narrative of the telephone call identifies the
16 person, business entity or political action committee making the expenditure and its chief executive
17 officer or equivalent. In the case of a person, business entity or political action committee making
18 or incurring such an independent expenditure, which entity is a tax-exempt organization under§
19 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of I 986 (other than an organization described in § 501(c)(3)
20 of such Code) or an exempt nonprofit as defined in § 17-25-3, or any subsequent corresponding
21 internal revenue code of the United States, as amended from time to time, or an organization
22 organized under Section 527 of said code, such narrative shall also include an audio message in the
23 following form: "The top five (5) donors to the organization responsible for this telephone call are"
24 followed by a list of the five (5) persons or entities making the largest aggregate donations during
25 the twelve (12) month period before the date of such telephone call; provided that, no donor shall
26 be listed who is not required to be disclosed in a report to the board of elections by the person,
27 business entity, or political action committee.

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

=====
LC005594
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- BALLOT QUESTION ADVOCACY AND REPORTING

1 This act would impose strict identity disclosure requirements for those who incur
2 expenditures for the production of ballot advocacy communications and political advertisements.

3 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC005594
=====