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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 -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

Introduced By: Representatives Messier, Alzate, Voas, Fellela, Serpa, Hull, and Baginski

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 17-9.1-7 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-9.1 entitled "Registration
2 of Voters" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **17-9.1-7. Registration at the division of motor vehicles — Additional agencies.**

4 (a) Every person applying at the division of motor vehicles for a driver's license or a
5 renewal of the license, or personal identification document issued by the division of motor vehicles,
6 and who is or may be by the next general election qualified to vote, shall be registered to vote, or
7 if previously registered, be afforded the opportunity to change their address for voting purposes.

8 **(b)(1) The division of motor vehicles shall identify each person applying for or renewing**
9 **a REAL ID driver's license or REAL ID personal identification document who provides an**
10 **identification document with such application that demonstrates United States citizenship and who**
11 **is of sufficient age to register to vote. The division of motor vehicles may identify such persons by**
12 **reviewing records of identification documents maintained by the division of motor vehicles that**
13 **demonstrate United States citizenship provided as part of a previous REAL ID licensing or**
14 **identification application. The division of motor vehicles may identify each person identifying or**
15 **renewing a standard driver's license or standard personal identification document who provides an**
16 **identification document with such application that demonstrates United States citizenship and who**
17 **is of sufficient age to register to vote. Submission of such a document shall be considered a**
18 **certification of citizenship, pursuant to § 17-9.1-11.**

19 **(2) Each such applicant's name, residence address, mailing address, if different from their**

1 residence address, date of birth, and registrant's signature and date of affixation of signature, and
2 any other information requested by the secretary of state, shall be transmitted by the division of
3 motor vehicles to the statewide central voter registration system, mandated pursuant to § 17-6-1.2,
4 not later than the next business day after the date of acceptance of the provided information by the
5 division of motor vehicles. Transmission shall be made by electronic means, as prescribed by the
6 secretary of state, and shall be in an electronic form, compatible with the voter registration system
7 maintained by the secretary of state. If the person is not registered to vote at the address which
8 appears in the electronic record, the secretary of state shall forward such electronic record to the
9 local board of the city or town of the applicant's residence. The secretary of state may adopt rules
10 to facilitate the administration of voter registration under this section.

11 (3) Notice shall be sent by mail to each such applicant that the applicant shall be registered
12 to vote or, if already registered, then the address on the registration record shall be updated. The
13 notice shall include information on how the applicant may decline to become registered to vote or
14 decline to update their registration address, and on how to affiliate with a political party or update
15 their affiliation. Any applicant who does not so decline within fourteen (14) days of such mailing,
16 shall be registered or the registration record shall be updated. The mailing required by this section,
17 may be combined with the contents of an acknowledgement of registration or change of address,
18 pursuant to § 17-9.1-25, and if so combined, shall serve as acknowledgement of registration or
19 change of address, that shall be deemed to satisfy the requirements of § 17-9.1-25 if the recipient
20 does not decline to register to vote or change their address within fourteen (14) days of such
21 mailing. Any person who declines to register under this subsection, shall be removed from the
22 central voter registration system and deemed not to have submitted an application to register to
23 vote. The information transmitted pursuant to subsection (b)(2) of this section shall be deemed
24 confidential and shall not be open to public inspection or copying or included on any public
25 registration list, until after fourteen (14) days of such mailing.

26 (4) The division of motor vehicles may obtain information from the secretary of state
27 regarding the voter registration status of persons applying for a driver's license or renewal or
28 change of address of it or a personal identification document. If the information from the secretary
29 of state is available to the division of motor vehicles during the licensing transaction, and the
30 information indicates that such applicant is on the active or inactive voter list, the applicant's
31 information shall be processed as a registration update by the division of motor vehicles and the
32 secretary of state, under the procedures set forth in subsections (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section
33 whether or not the applicant satisfies the conditions of subsection (b)(1) of this section.

34 (5) The procedures set forth in subsections (b)(1) through (b)(4) of this section shall not

1 apply to an applicant who is requesting or is renewing a license that contains the applicant's official
2 business address, in lieu of a residence address, as provided in § 31-10-26(d). The division of motor
3 vehicles shall provide such applicant with a voter registration opportunity, under the procedures set
4 forth in subsection (c) of this section.

5 (6) The division of motor vehicles, in consultation with the secretary of state, may provide
6 applicants under subsection (b) of this section with appropriate notices and instructions regarding
7 the voter registration procedures set forth in subsection (b) of this section.

8 ~~(b)~~(c) For each person applying for a driver's license or renewal of it or a personal
9 identification document who is not an applicant under subsection (b) of this section, and who is of
10 sufficient age to register to vote, the division of motor vehicles shall provide such person with an
11 application to register to vote under the procedures set forth in this subsection. The application to
12 register to vote must be offered simultaneously with the application for the driver's license or
13 renewal of it or personal identification document. Division of motor vehicles employees must
14 provide to applicants for driver's licenses, license renewal, or personal identification documents
15 the same level of assistance and instruction with respect to the application to register to vote as is
16 provided with respect to the application for driver's licenses, renewal of the license, or personal
17 identification documents; provided, that one signature may be sufficient on the application for
18 driver's license, renewal of the license, or personal identification document and the application to
19 register to vote. The applicant shall be afforded the opportunity to ~~decline~~ certify their United States
20 citizenship to register to vote. If previously registered, the applicant shall be afforded the
21 opportunity to change his or her address for voting purposes. In order to protect the privacy of
22 those who do not wish to register to vote for any reason, the failure of an applicant for a driver's
23 license or renewal of it or a personal identification document to register to vote may not be used
24 for any purposes other than to determine the person's voter registration status.

25 (c)(d)(1) The voter registration application, pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, shall
26 contain the registrant's name, residence address, mailing address if different from residence
27 address, date of birth, and registrant's signature and date of affixation of signature, and may include
28 any other information, certifications, and declarations, including those made under the penalty of
29 perjury, that may be required by the state board in order to administer a single and unified system
30 of voter registration in accordance with applicable state and federal laws that shall enable duly
31 registered voters to vote in all elections in their respective voting districts including, elections for
32 federal officers. The voter registration application must also include, in print identical to that used
33 in the attestation portion of the form, the following:

34 (i) The penalties provided by law for submitting a false voter registration;

1 (ii) A statement that, if the applicant declines to register to vote, his or her decision will
2 remain confidential and be used only for voter registration purposes; and

3 (iii) A statement that, if the applicant does register to vote, information regarding the office
4 or branch of the division of motor vehicles to which the application was submitted will remain
5 confidential, to be used only for voter registration purposes.

6 (2) It shall be the responsibility of the division of motor vehicles to print and to have
7 available at all times a sufficient number of voter registration forms in order to carry out the
8 provisions of this section.

9 ~~(d)~~(e) The completed voter registration application, pursuant to subsection (c) of this
10 section, shall be transmitted by the division of motor vehicles to the central voter registration
11 system mandated pursuant to § 17-6-1.2 not later than the next business day after the date of
12 acceptance by the division of motor vehicles. Transmission shall be made by electronic means as
13 prescribed by the secretary of state, and shall be in an electronic form compatible with the voter
14 registration system maintained by the secretary of state.

15 ~~(e)~~(f) Any person who has fully and correctly completed an application to register to vote
16 at the division of motor vehicles or whose record has been transferred, pursuant to subsection (b)
17 of this section, is presumed to be registered as of the date of the acceptance of the registration by
18 the division of motor vehicles, subject to verification of the registration by the local board as
19 provided in § 17-9.1-25.

20 ~~(f)~~(g) Pursuant to § 17-9.1-11, the division of motor vehicles shall not transmit the voter
21 registration of any applicant, under the procedures set forth in subsection (c) of this section, who
22 fails to certify that they are a citizen of the United States. Notwithstanding any other provision of
23 law to the contrary, any applicant who provides an identification document that demonstrates a lack
24 of United States citizenship or who affirms that the applicant is not a United States citizen, shall
25 not be offered an opportunity to register to vote, and the division of motor vehicles shall not transfer
26 the record of such applicant, pursuant to subsections (b) or (c) of this section.

27 ~~(g)~~(h) If a person who is ineligible to vote becomes registered to vote pursuant to this
28 section, that person's registration shall be presumed to be deemed officially authorized and not be
29 deemed attributable to or the fault of that person. Notwithstanding the foregoing, anyone who
30 knowingly and willfully provides false information pursuant to this section shall be subject to
31 prosecution under § 17-9.1-12.

32 ~~(h)~~(i) The state board of elections shall have the authority to adopt regulations to implement
33 and administer the provisions of this section, including all registrations taken at the division of
34 motor vehicles.

1 ~~(i)(j)~~(1) ~~In accordance with Section 7 of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, 52~~
2 ~~U.S.C. § 20506, other~~ Other applicable state ~~government, federal, local, or education~~ agencies that
3 the secretary verifies already collect documents that would provide proof of eligibility, including
4 age, citizenship, and residence address, may follow the procedures for automatic voter registration
5 enumerated for the division of motor vehicles as described in subsections (b) through ~~(f)~~(f) of this
6 section, except that such agencies may verify citizenship by database matching or other means
7 deemed reliable by the secretary of state, instead of verifying documents provided during a
8 transaction.

9 (2) Any additional agencies that are designated for automatic registration must follow the
10 rules and protocols established in this section for the division of motor vehicles.

11 (3) Any additional agency that collects sufficient information to register to vote multiple
12 individuals through one application for service, shall follow the procedures described in subsections
13 (b) through (f) of this section for each eligible individual on an application, except that each
14 individual shall be provided with a notice pursuant to subsection (b)(3) of this section.

15 (k) Other applicable state, local, or education agencies that do not fall under subsection (j)
16 of this section, but that the secretary of state verifies collect sufficient information to update the
17 address on existing registration records, may follow the procedures for automatic voter registration,
18 enumerated for the division of motor vehicles, as described in subsections (b) through (f) of this
19 section, for address updates only.

20 (j) Effective date. The provisions of this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after the
21 administrator of the division of motor vehicles certifies in writing to the general assembly that the
22 Rhode Island motor vehicle licensing system (RIMS) computer system is capable of meeting the
23 requirements set forth in this act. The administrator of the division of motor vehicles shall consult
24 with the secretary prior to making this determination about the computer system.

25 ~~(i)~~(l) Effective date. The provisions of this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after
26 the administrator of the division of motor vehicles certifies in writing to the general assembly that
27 the Rhode Island motor vehicle licensing system (RIMS) computer system is capable of meeting
28 the requirements set forth in this act, however, the division of motor vehicles shall submit such
29 certification to the general assembly on or before June 30, 2028. The administrator of the division
30 of motor vehicles shall consult with the secretary prior to making this determination about the
31 computer system.

32 (m) The division of motor vehicles shall not offer an opportunity to register to vote pursuant
33 to subsections (b) and (c) of this section to an applicant for a driver privilege card or driver privilege
34 permit under chapter 10.4 of title 31.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

1 This act would increase the role of the division of motor vehicles in the voter registration
2 and address verification process, by establishing very specific obligations and responsibilities that
3 must be followed before offering an individual an application to register to vote.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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