

2026 -- H 8049

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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 -- COURTS -- JUDICIAL SELECTION

Introduced By: Representatives Kislak, Tanzi, Cruz, Handy, and Ajello

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 8-16.1-4 of the General Laws in Chapter 8-16.1 entitled "Judicial
2 Selection" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **8-16.1-4. Criteria for selection of best qualified nominees.**

4 (a) The commission shall consider, but is not limited to, the following factors in selecting
5 the best qualified nominees: intellect, ability, temperament, impartiality, diligence, experience,
6 maturity, education, publications, and record of public, community, and government service. Every
7 person shall, at the time of consideration by the commission, be an attorney and licensed to practice
8 law in the state of Rhode Island and be a current member of the Rhode Island bar association in
9 good standing.

10 (b) The commission shall exercise reasonable efforts to encourage racial, ethnic, and
11 gender diversity within the judiciary of this state. To further this goal, on an annual basis, the
12 commission shall report to the general assembly and to the governor on (i) the statistics regarding
13 the race, ethnicity and gender of applicants considered by the commission in the previous year and
14 (ii) efforts made by the commission during the previous year to encourage racial, ethnic and gender
15 diversity within the judiciary of this state. The form of the report and the means by which the
16 commission shall request the necessary information from applicants shall be determined by the
17 commission pursuant to its rule-making authority, except that no applicant shall be required to
18 provide the information as a prerequisite to consideration, and the identifying information with
19 respect to race, ethnicity and gender shall be collected anonymously from applicants. The report

1 shall be made available to the public. The commission shall also consider the candidate's sensitivity
2 to historically disadvantaged classes, and may disqualify any candidate with a demonstrated history
3 of bias towards any of these classes.

4 (c) The commission shall establish a standardized merit-based selection process that
5 includes an initial blind review of applications prior to any interview or public hearing. Identifying
6 information, including the applicant's name and any other information reasonably likely to disclose
7 the applicant's identity, shall be redacted for purposes of preliminary evaluation. The commission's
8 rules shall require that applicants be evaluated according to uniform, job-related criteria adopted in
9 advance and published on the commission's website. The rules shall also require structured
10 evaluation instruments or scoring rubrics sufficient to demonstrate that recommendations are based
11 on the published merit criteria.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- COURTS -- JUDICIAL SELECTION

1 This act would require the judicial nominating commission to establish a standardized
2 merit-based selection process that includes an initial blind review of applications prior to any
3 interview or public hearing and that applicants be evaluated according to uniform, job-related
4 criteria adopted in advance and published on the commission's website.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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