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LC004657

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S T A T E O F R H O D E I S L A N D

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

Introduced By: Senators Dimitri, Thompson, Famiglietti, Patalano, E Morgan, Rogers, de la Cruz, Paolino, and Appollonio

Date Introduced: February 06, 2026

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 17-9.1 of the General Laws entitled "Registration of Voters" is
2 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **17-9.1-7.1. Department of environmental management -- Registration to vote.**

4 (a) Every person applying for a hunting or fishing license or a renewal of either of those
5 licenses and who is or may be by the next general election qualified to vote, shall be registered to
6 vote, or if previously registered, be afforded the opportunity to change their address for voting
7 purposes.

8 (b) The application to register to vote shall be offered simultaneously with the application
9 for a hunting or fishing license or a license renewal. Department of environmental management
10 employees shall provide to applicants for hunting and fishing licenses or their renewal, the same
11 level of assistance and instruction with respect to the application to register to vote, as is provided
12 with respect to the application for hunting and fishing licenses, or renewal of either of those
13 licenses; provided, that one signature may be sufficient on the application for the hunting or fishing
14 license, or renewal of either of those licenses and the application to register to vote. The applicant
15 shall be afforded the opportunity to decline to register to vote. If previously registered, the applicant
16 shall be afforded the opportunity to change the applicant's address for voting purposes. In order to
17 protect the privacy of those who decline to register to vote for any reason, the failure of an applicant
18 to qualify for a hunting or fishing license may not be used for any purposes, other than to determine
19 the person's voter registration status.

10 (i) The penalties provided by law for submitting a false voter registration;
11 (ii) A statement that, if the applicant declines to register to vote, the applicant's decision
12 shall remain confidential and be used only for voter registration purposes; and
13 (iii) A statement that, if the applicant does register to vote, information regarding purchase
14 of a hunting or fishing license and the location where the license was required shall remain
15 confidential, to be used only for voter registration purposes.

16 (2) It shall be the responsibility of the department of environmental management to print
17 and to have available at all times a sufficient number of voter registration forms necessary to carry
18 out the provisions of this section.

19 (d) The completed voter registration application shall be transmitted by the department of
20 environmental management to the central voter registration system, mandated pursuant to § 17-6-
21 1.2 not later than the next business day after the date of acceptance by the department of
22 environmental management. Transmission shall be made by electronic means, as prescribed by the
23 secretary of state, and shall be in an electronic form, compatible with the voter registration system
24 maintained by the secretary of state.

25 (e) Any person who has fully and correctly completed an application to register to vote,
26 while purchasing a hunting or fishing license, shall be presumed to be registered as of the date of
27 the acceptance of the registration by the department of environmental management, subject to
28 verification of the registration by the local board, as provided in § 17-9.1-25.

29 (f) Pursuant to § 17-9.1-11, the department of environmental management shall not
30 transmit the voter registration of any applicant, who fails to certify that they are a citizen of the
31 United States.

32 (g) If a person who is ineligible to vote becomes registered to vote pursuant to this section,
33 that person's registration shall be presumed to be deemed officially authorized and not be deemed
34 attributable to or the fault of that person. Notwithstanding the foregoing, anyone who knowingly

1 and willfully provides false information pursuant to this section, shall be subject to prosecution
2 under § 17-9.1-12.

3 (h) The state board of elections shall have the authority to adopt regulations to implement
4 and administer the provisions of this section, including all registrations, completed in conjunction
5 with the purchase of a hunting or fishing license.

6 (i)(1) In accordance with Section 7 of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, 52
7 U.S.C. § 20506, other applicable state government agencies that the secretary verifies already
8 collect documents that would provide proof of eligibility, including age, citizenship, and residence
9 address, may follow the procedures for automatic voter registration enumerated for the department
10 of environmental management, as described in subsections (b) through (d) of this section.

11 (2) Any additional agencies that are designated for automatic voter registration shall follow
12 the rules and protocols established in this section for the department of environmental management.

13 (j) Effective date. The provisions of this section shall take effect ninety (90) days after the
14 director of the department of environmental management certifies in writing to the general
15 assembly, that the department of environmental management's computer system is capable of
16 meeting the requirements set forth in this chapter. The director of the department of environmental
17 management shall consult with the secretary of state prior to making this determination about the
18 computer system.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
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- 1 This act would allow automatic voter registration for Rhode Islanders applying for hunting
- 2 and fishing licenses, like the procedures in effect for applicants to the division of motor vehicles.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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