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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 CRIMINAL PROCEDURE -- IDENTIFICATION AND APPREHENSION OF  
CRIMINALS

Introduced By: Senators Bissaillon, Bell, Burke, and Dimitri

Date Introduced: February 13, 2026

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 12-1-12.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 12-1 entitled  
2 "Identification and Apprehension of Criminals" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **12-1-12.1. Sealing of records of persons acquitted or otherwise exonerated by**  
4 **operation of law or by motion.**

5 (a) By operation of law, the court shall automatically seal the records of any criminal case  
6 that was dismissed pursuant to the district court rule of criminal procedure 48(a), including all  
7 records of the division of criminal identification established by § 12-1-4 without the requirement  
8 of filing a motion under the following circumstances:

9 (1) Cases dismissed pursuant to the district court rule of criminal procedure 48(a) on or  
10 after January 1, 2023, shall be automatically sealed not less than ten (10) days and not more than  
11 twenty (20) days after the dismissal; ~~or~~

12 (2) Cases dismissed pursuant to the district court rule of criminal procedure 48(a) prior to  
13 January 1, 2023, shall be sealed administratively by the court clerk at the request of the defendant  
14 and any sealing order of the district court entered as a result shall be sent electronically by the clerk  
15 of the court to the bureau of criminal identification established by § 12-1-4 within five (5) days of  
16 the entry of the order and shall be carried out within ninety (90) days of the receipt of the order; or

17 (3) Individual counts of a criminal complaint dismissed pursuant to district court rule of  
18 criminal procedure 48(a) on or after October 1, 2026, shall be sealed administratively by the court

1 clerk upon the request of the defendant following the conclusion of the matter in the district court.  
2 Any sealing order of the district court shall be sent electronically by the clerk of the court to the  
3 bureau of criminal identification established by § 12-1-4 within five (5) days of the entry of the  
4 order and shall be carried out within ninety (90) days of the receipt of the order.

5 (b) Any person who is acquitted or otherwise exonerated of all counts in a criminal case,  
6 including, but not limited to, dismissals not described in subsection (a) of this section or filing of a  
7 no true bill or no information, may file a motion for the sealing of his or her court records in the  
8 case.

9 (1) Any person filing a motion for sealing his or her court records pursuant to this section  
10 shall give notice of the hearing date set by the court to the department of the attorney general and  
11 the police department that originally brought the charge against the person at least ten (10) days  
12 prior to the hearing.

13 (2) If the court, after the hearing at which all relevant testimony and information shall be  
14 considered, finds that the person is entitled to the sealing of the records, it shall order the sealing  
15 of the court records of the person in that case.

16 (3) The clerk of the court shall, within forty-five (45) days of the order of the court granting  
17 the motion, place under seal the court records in the case in which the acquittal, dismissal, no true  
18 bill, no information, or other exoneration has been entered.

19 (c) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, in all cases involving a filing  
20 subsequent to a plea of not guilty, guilty, or nolo contendere to a charge of a crime involving  
21 domestic violence, the court having jurisdiction over the case shall retain the records of the case  
22 for a period of three (3) years from the date of filing. The records shall not be expunged or sealed  
23 for a period of three (3) years from the date of the filing.

24 (d) The defendant shall be advised at the hearing that any and all bail money relating to a  
25 case that remains on deposit and is not claimed at the time of sealing shall be escheated to the state's  
26 general treasury in accordance with chapter 12 of title 8.

27 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on October 1, 2026.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

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1           This act would administratively seal, upon request of the defendant following the  
2 conclusion of the matter in district court, individual counts of any criminal complaints dismissed  
3 pursuant to Rule 48(a) that were filed on or after October 1, 2026.

4           This act would take effect on October 1, 2026.

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