

**2014 -- S 2546 AS AMENDED**

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LC003997  
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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014**

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A N A C T

RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE - COURTS - COURT  
ADMINISTRATION

Introduced By: Senators McCaffrey, Lynch, and Ciccone

Date Introduced: February 27, 2014

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

(by request)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Chapter 8-15 of the General Laws entitled "Court Administration" is hereby  
2 amended by adding thereto the following section:

3           **8-15-11. Electronic Filing and Online Payments.--** (a) In addition to any other filing  
4 fees or court costs required by law or court rule, parties to any court matter may be required to  
5 pay a technology surcharge or fee not to exceed twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) at the inception or  
6 the conclusion of any case, or upon making any electronic payment online to any of the courts  
7 within the unified judicial system. Such surcharges or fees shall be determined by the state court  
8 administrator with the approval of the chief justice.

9           (b) The collection of technology surcharges shall be monitored and supervised by the  
10 judiciary's director of finance and shall be deposited into a restricted receipt account designated  
11 as "Rhode Island judiciary technology surcharge account," the proceeds of which shall be solely  
12 for use by the judiciary in support of its technology infrastructure and case management system.  
13 On or before January 15, 2015, and annually thereafter on or before January 15, the judiciary's  
14 director of finance shall file a report with the governor, the speaker of the house, and the  
15 president of the senate detailing: (1) The total amount of funds collected and deposited into the  
16 judiciary technology surcharge account for the most recently completed fiscal year; (2) The fund  
17 balance as of the date of the report; (3) An itemization of all expenditures and other uses of said  
18 funds from said account for the most recently completed fiscal year; and (4) An annual evaluation

1 [as to the appropriateness of the amount of the technology surcharge or fee.](#)

2 [\(c\) The implementation of electronic court records shall not alter the application of § 38-](#)  
3 [2-5 to any judicial records, whether in paper or electronic format.](#)

4 SECTION 2. Section 8-6-5 of the General Laws in Chapter 8-6 entitled "General Powers  
5 of Supreme and Superior Courts" is hereby amended to read as follows:

6 **8-6-5. Arbitration of civil actions.** -- The presiding justice of the superior court may  
7 promulgate rules and regulations providing for compulsory and/or noncompulsory nonbinding  
8 arbitration of such category or categories of civil actions filed in, or appealed to, the superior  
9 court as he or she shall determine. The matter shall be heard by a single arbitrator who shall be  
10 selected by mutual agreement of the plaintiff(s) and defendant(s). If, after thirty (30) days, the  
11 plaintiff(s) and defendant(s) are unable to agree upon the selection of an arbitrator, a justice of the  
12 superior court shall select the arbitrator upon request in writing from either party. The costs of  
13 arbitration shall be borne by the Rhode Island state court system and a reasonable cost of the  
14 arbitration, not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500) per case, may be assessed and apportioned  
15 to each of the parties by the superior court pursuant to rules and regulations promulgated by the  
16 presiding justice of the superior court consistent with § 8-6-6. The assessed costs received from  
17 the parties shall be deposited into the general fund. Any party dissatisfied with the decision of the  
18 arbitrator may demand a trial by jury if one was timely claimed in the complaint or answer, or a  
19 trial by judge if no jury trial was claimed. The decision of the arbitrator shall not be admissible at  
20 the trial. The court may require a party who rejects an arbitrator's award and demands a trial to  
21 post a three hundred dollar (\$300) filing fee [and pay a technology surcharge in accordance with](#)  
22 [§8-15-11](#). The filing fee shall be posted with the superior court arbitration office and deposited  
23 into an arbitration fund restricted-receipt account established under the control of the state court  
24 director of finance. The arbitration funds shall not be subject to the indirect cost recoveries  
25 provisions set forth in § 35-4-27. If more than one party rejects the arbitrator's award and  
26 demands a trial, the filing fee, first received in the arbitration office, shall designate the party  
27 rejecting the award. Should the verdict at trial be more favorable to the party than the arbitrator's  
28 award, the filing fee shall be reimbursed to that party. Should the verdict be equal to, or less  
29 favorable to, the party than the arbitrator's award, the filing fee posted shall be forfeited as a  
30 sanction. If forfeited as a sanction, the fee shall remain available for program expenses from the  
31 arbitration fund restricted-receipt account. The presiding justice of the superior court shall be  
32 authorized to retain the services of qualified arbitrators and to direct payment for such services  
33 and other related expenses from the arbitration fund restricted-receipt account and may appoint an  
34 administrator of the arbitration program for a ten-~~(10)~~year [\(10\)](#) term and until a successor is

1 appointed and qualified.

2 SECTION 3. Sections 9-12-10 and 9-12-10.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 9-12  
3 entitled "District Court Practice" are hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **9-12-10. Claim of appeal of superior court.** -- Except as otherwise provided, in all  
5 civil cases in the district court, any party may cause the case to be removed for trial on all  
6 questions of law and fact to the superior court for the county in which division the suit is pending;  
7 by claiming an appeal from the judgment of the district court, in writing, filed with the clerk of  
8 the division within two (2) days, exclusive of Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, after the  
9 judgment is entered; provided, that the party claiming the appeal, at the time of claiming the  
10 appeal, shall pay to the clerk all costs, including an attorney's fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00), for the  
11 party or parties adversely interested in the judgment, to be paid by the clerk to the attorney for the  
12 adverse party. The attorney's fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00) shall be divided equally among the  
13 attorneys for the parties adversely interested when more than one adverse party is involved; and  
14 provided, further, that costs shall not be taxed, exclusive of the attorney's fee, at a sum not less  
15 than twenty-five dollars (\$25.00), [in addition to a technology surcharge assessed in accordance](#)  
16 [with § 8-15-11.](#)

17 **9-12-10.1. Claim of appeal to superior court in landlord tenant actions.** -- In any  
18 civil action pursuant to chapter 18 of title 34, in the district court or other appropriate court, any  
19 party may cause the case to be removed for trial on all questions of law and fact to the superior  
20 court for the county in which division the suit is pending, by claiming an appeal from the  
21 judgment of the district or other appropriate court, in writing, filed with the clerk of the division  
22 within five (5) days after the judgment is entered; provided, that the party claiming the appeal at  
23 the time of claiming the appeal, shall pay to the clerk all costs, including an attorney's fee of fifty  
24 dollars (\$50.00) for the party or parties adversely interested in the judgment, to be paid by the  
25 clerk to the attorney for the adverse party; provided, further, that costs shall not be taxed,  
26 exclusive of the attorney's fee, at a sum less than twenty-five dollars (\$25.00), [in addition to a](#)  
27 [technology surcharge assessed in accordance with § 8-15-11.](#)

28 SECTION 4. Section 9-24-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 9-24 entitled "Appellate  
29 Proceedings" is hereby amended to read as follows:

30 **9-24-1. Filing of appeal.** -- Any party aggrieved by a final judgment, decree, or order of  
31 the superior court may, within the time prescribed by applicable procedural rules, appeal to the  
32 supreme court. Subject to the provisions of applicable procedural rules, the [party appeal](#)  
33 [appealing](#) shall ~~be taken by filing file~~ a claim of appeal in the office of the clerk of the court from  
34 which the appeal is taken, and shall deposit with the clerk an amount not exceeding fifty dollars

1 (\$50.00) as prescribed by the rules and regulations of the supreme court, in addition to a  
2 technology surcharge assessed in accordance with § 8-15-11.

3 SECTION 5. Sections 9-29-1, 9-29-18, 9-29-19 and 9-29-20 of the General Laws in  
4 Chapter 9-29 entitled "Fees" are hereby amended to read as follows:

5 **9-29-1. District court fees.** -- (a) Every district court shall be allowed the following  
6 fees, in full, to be taxed in the bill of costs in every civil action:

7 (1) ~~(1)~~ For the entry of every small claim \$55.00.

8 (2) ~~(2)~~ For the entry of every other action \$80.00.

9 (3) ~~(3)~~ For every writ of execution \$20.00.

10 (b) In addition to the fees set forth herein, the district court shall apply a technology  
11 surcharge ~~shall be placed on all filing fees~~ assessed in accordance with § 8-15-11.

12 (c) Provided, that five dollars (\$5.00) of the fee for the entry of every action in  
13 subdivision (a)(1) or (a)(2) or writ in subdivision (a)(3) shall be forwarded to Rhode Island ~~H~~Legal  
14 ~~s~~Services.

15 **9-29-18. Superior court fees.** -- (a) The superior court shall be allowed the following  
16 fees in full to be taxed in the bill of costs in every civil action:

17 (1) ~~(1)~~ For entry of every civil action, or petition \$160.00.

18 (2) ~~(2)~~ For every writ of execution \$50.00.

19 (3) ~~(3)~~ For the issuance of every citation \$25.00.

20 (b) In addition to the fees set forth in subsection (a) of this section, the superior court  
21 shall apply a technology surcharge ~~shall be placed~~ on all filing fees assessed in accordance with §  
22 8-15-11.

23 (c) Provided, that ten dollars (\$10.00) of the fee for the entry of every civil action or  
24 petition shall be forwarded to Rhode Island Legal Services.

25 **9-29-19. Family court fees.** -- (a) The family court shall be allowed the following fees  
26 in full to be taxed in the bill of costs in every domestic relations or other civil proceeding:

27 (1) ~~(1)~~ For the entry of every petition, complaint, or action \$120.00.

28 (2) ~~(2)~~ For every writ of execution \$40.00.

29 (b) In addition to the fees as set forth herein, the family court shall apply a technology  
30 surcharge ~~on shall be placed on all filing~~ fees assessed in accordance with § 8-15-11.

31 (c) Provided, that ten dollars (\$10.00) of the fee for the entry of every petition,  
32 complaint or action shall be forwarded to Rhode Island ~~H~~Legal ~~s~~Services.

33 **9-29-20. Supreme court fees.** -- (a) The supreme court, by a majority of its members,  
34 shall have the power to prescribe by rule a fee of not more than one hundred fifty dollars

1 (\$150.00) for docketing a civil appeal or docketing any other proceeding brought to review a civil  
2 matter; and to prescribe a waiver of the fee as to a person who is unable to pay the fee.

3 ~~(b) Commencing July 1, 1992, in addition to the fees set forth herein, the court, by a~~  
4 ~~majority of its members, shall have the power to prescribe by rule a surcharge in the amount of~~  
5 ~~forty (\$40.00) for docketing a civil appeal or docketing any other proceeding brought to review a~~  
6 ~~civil matter.~~

7 ~~(e)(b) Commencing July 1, 1999, the~~ The court may ~~increase the~~ apply a technology or  
8 other surcharge for docketing a civil appeal or docketing any other proceeding brought before the  
9 court in an amount not to exceed ~~to~~ eighty-five dollars (\$85.00).

10 SECTION 6. Section 10-16-4 of the General Laws in Chapter 10-16 entitled "Small  
11 Claims and Consumer Claims" is hereby amended to read as follows:

12 **10-16-4. Filing fee – Waiver of appeal.** -- (a) The plaintiff shall pay into the court an  
13 entry fee of fifty-five dollars (\$55.00), of which twenty dollars (\$20.00) shall be placed in a  
14 "small claims mediation restricted-receipt account" together with an amount equal to the then-  
15 prevailing postal rate, for mailing notices in the case, which shall be deemed the beginning of the  
16 action. The "small claims mediation restricted-receipt account" shall be established under the  
17 control of the state court director of finance; the chief judge of the district court shall be  
18 authorized to pay for the services of qualified mediators and other related expenses from the  
19 "small claims mediation restricted-receipt account." In addition to the entry fee, the court shall  
20 apply a technology surcharge in accordance with § 8-15-11.

21 (b) The plaintiff shall also file with his or her claim a written waiver of right of appeal.

22 SECTION 7. Chapter 12-20 of the General Laws entitled "Costs" is hereby amended by  
23 adding thereto the following section:

24 **12-20-12. Technology Surcharge.** -- A technology surcharge shall be assessed as a cost  
25 against the defendant in accordance with § 8-15-11.

26 SECTION 8. Section 28-35-32 of the General Laws in Chapter 28-35 entitled "Workers  
27 Compensation-Procedure" is hereby amended to read as follows:

28 **28-35-32. Costs – Counsel and witness fees.** -- ~~No fee shall be charged by the clerk of~~  
29 ~~any court or by the administrator of the workers' compensation court for the performance of any~~  
30 ~~service required by this chapter, except for certified copies of decrees and copies of transcripts.~~

31 Notwithstanding any provisions of law to the contrary, the workers' compensation court shall  
32 be allowed a filing fee of twenty dollars (\$20.00) for the filing of a petition under chapters 29 –  
33 38 of this title; and a filing fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) for the filing of an appeal under §  
34 28-35-28, which sums shall be deposited to provide additional funding to the uninsured

1 employers fund as established by chapter ~~28-53~~ [of this title. The workers' compensation court](#)  
2 [may charge fees for certified copies of decrees and copies of transcripts. In addition to the fees set](#)  
3 [forth herein, the workers' compensation court shall apply a technology surcharge on all petitions](#)  
4 [and appeals in accordance with § 8-15-11.](#) In proceedings under this chapter, and in proceedings  
5 under chapter 37 of this title, costs shall be awarded, including counsel fees and fees for medical  
6 and other expert witnesses, including interpreters, to employees who successfully prosecute  
7 petitions for compensation; petitions for medical expenses; petitions to amend a preliminary  
8 order or memorandum of agreement; and all other employee petitions, except petitions for lump-  
9 sum commutation; and to employees who successfully defend, in whole or in part, proceedings  
10 seeking to reduce or terminate any and all workers' compensation benefits; and to medical  
11 services providers who successfully prosecute petitions for the payment of medical expenses,  
12 except that medical services providers shall not be paid expert witness fees for testimony in  
13 support of petitions filed in their behalf. These costs shall be assessed against the employer by a  
14 single judge, by an appellate panel, and by the supreme court on appeal consistent with the  
15 services rendered before each tribunal and shall be made a part of the decree. No employee's  
16 attorney shall accept any other or additional fees for his services for the particular petition for  
17 which the fees are awarded in each tribunal.

18 SECTION 9. Sections 31-41.1-3, 31-41.1-4, 31-41.1-8, and 31-41.1-9 of the General  
19 Laws in Chapter 31-41.1 entitled "Adjudication of Traffic Offenses" are hereby amended to read  
20 as follows:

21 **31-41.1-3. Method of payment.** -- If the offending operator elects to dispose of the  
22 charge without personally appearing before the traffic tribunal, he or she shall execute the form  
23 indicated and return it to the traffic tribunal not later than twenty (20) days from the date of the  
24 summons, either by mailing or delivering the form and summons, to the violation section of the  
25 traffic tribunal, or to its designee, together with a check or money order in the amount indicated  
26 by the fine schedule on the form [in addition to any technology surcharge applied by the traffic](#)  
27 [tribunal assessed in accordance with § 8-15-11.](#)

28 **31-41.1-4. Schedule of violations.**-- (a) The penalties for violations of the enumerated  
29 sections, listed in numerical order, correspond to the fines described. However, those offenses for  
30 which punishments ~~which~~ may vary according to the severity of the offense, or punishment ~~which~~  
31 [that](#) require the violator to perform a service, shall be heard and decided by the traffic tribunal or  
32 municipal court. The following violations may be handled administratively through the method  
33 prescribed in this chapter. This list is not exclusive and jurisdiction may be conferred on the  
34 traffic tribunal with regard to other violations.

1 VIOLATIONS SCHEDULE

2 SEE THE BOOK FOR THE PROPER TABLE.

3 SPEEDING Fine

4 SEE THE BOOK FOR THE PROPER TABLE.

5 (b) In addition to any other penalties provided by law, a judge may impose the  
6 following penalties for speeding:

7 (1) For speeds up to and including ten miles per hour (10 mph) over the posted speed  
8 limit on public highways, a fine as provided for in subsection (a) of this section for the first  
9 offense; ten dollars (\$10.00) per mile for each mile in excess of the speed limit for the second  
10 offense if within twelve (12) months of the first offense; and fifteen dollars (\$15.00) per mile for  
11 each mile in excess of the speed limit for the third and any subsequent offense if within twelve  
12 (12) months of the first offense. In addition, the license may be suspended up to thirty (30) days.

13 (2) For speeds in excess of ten miles per hour (10 mph) over the posted speed limit on  
14 public highways, a mandatory fine of ten dollars (\$10.00) for each mile over the speed limit for  
15 the first offense; fifteen dollars (\$15.00) per mile for each mile in excess of the speed limit for  
16 the second offense if within twelve (12) months of the first offense; and twenty dollars (\$20.00)  
17 per mile for each mile in excess of the speed limit for the third and subsequent offense if within  
18 twelve (12) months of the first offense. In addition, the license may be suspended up to sixty (60)  
19 days.

20 (c) Except for a technology surcharge assessed in accordance with § 8-15-11, Any any  
21 person charged with a violation who pays the fine administratively pursuant to chapter ~~8-2~~ 41.1 of  
22 title ~~8~~ 31 shall not be subject to any additional costs or assessments, including, but not limited to,  
23 the hearing fee established in § 8-18-4 ~~or assessment for substance abuse prevention.~~

24 **31-41.1-8. Appellate review.** -- (a) *Appeals panels.* The chief magistrate of the traffic  
25 tribunal shall establish one or more appeals panels, each consisting of three (3) members of the  
26 traffic tribunal, and shall select a presiding member for each appeals panel from the members so  
27 appointed. No member of the traffic tribunal shall serve as a member of an appeals panel hearing  
28 the appeal of a determination by that member. The chief judge shall also designate any other  
29 personnel of the traffic tribunal that may be necessary to assist an appeals panel in carrying out its  
30 functions.

31 (b) *Right of appeal.* Any person who is aggrieved by a determination of a judge or  
32 magistrate may appeal the determination pursuant to the provisions of this section.

33 (c) *Appeals panel.* Each appeal filed pursuant to this section shall be reviewed by an  
34 appeals panel, which shall make a determination of the appeal, and shall cause an appropriate

1 order to be entered in the records of the traffic tribunal.

2 (d) *Time limitations.* No appeal shall be reviewed if it is filed more than ten (10) days  
3 after notice was given of the determination ~~appealed~~ from which it was appealed, unless it is  
4 determined that failure to file was due to excusable neglect. Notice shall be complete upon  
5 mailing.

6 (e) *Appeal procedures.* Any person desiring to file an appeal from an adverse  
7 determination pursuant to this section shall do so in a form and manner provided by the clerk of  
8 the traffic tribunal. The transcript of any hearing ~~which~~ that formed the basis for the  
9 determination will be reviewed only if it is submitted by the appellant. An appeal shall not be  
10 deemed to be finally submitted until the appellant has submitted all forms or documents required  
11 to be submitted by the clerk of the traffic tribunal or by this section.

12 (f) *Standard of review.* The appeals panel shall not substitute its judgment for that of the  
13 judge or magistrate as to the weight of the evidence on questions of fact. The appeals panel may  
14 affirm the decision of the judge or magistrate, or it may remand the case for further proceedings  
15 or reverse or modify the decision if the substantial rights of the appellant have been ~~prejudicial~~  
16 prejudiced because the judge's findings, inferences, conclusions or decisions are:

- 17 (1) In violation of constitutional or statutory provisions;  
18 (2) In excess of the statutory authority of the judge or magistrate;  
19 (3) Made upon unlawful procedure;  
20 (4) Affected by other error of law;  
21 (5) Clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantial evidence on the  
22 whole record; or  
23 (6) Arbitrary or capricious or characterized by abuse of discretion or clearly  
24 unwarranted exercise of discretion.

25 (g) *Transcript of hearings.* Transcripts of the record of any hearing may be obtained at  
26 the cost of the traffic tribunal, if prepared by the tribunal, or at a rate specified in the contract  
27 between the court and the contractor, if prepared by a private contractor.

28 (h) *Fees.* The fee for filing an appeal shall be twenty-five dollars (\$25.00), and this fee  
29 shall be deposited into the general fund. In addition to the appeal filing fee, the traffic tribunal  
30 shall apply a technology surcharge assessed in accordance with § 8-15-11. No appeal shall be  
31 accepted unless the required fee has been paid or if forma pauperis status has been granted.

32 (i) *Stays pending appeal.* Whenever a determination has not been made within thirty  
33 (30) days after an appeal has been finally submitted, a stay of execution will be deemed granted  
34 by operation of law, and the license, certificate, permit, or privilege affected will be automatically



1 restored pending final determination by the appeals panel.

2 **31-41.1-9. Appeals to district court.** -- (a) *Right of appeal.* Any person who is  
3 aggrieved by a determination of an appeals panel may appeal the determination pursuant to the  
4 provisions of this section.

5 (b) *Time limitations.* No appeal shall be reviewed if it is filed more than ten (10) days  
6 after notice was given of the determination ~~appealed~~ from which it was appealed. Notice shall be  
7 complete upon mailing.

8 (c) *Appeal procedures.* Any person desiring to file an appeal from an adverse  
9 determination pursuant to this section shall do so in a form and manner provided by the clerk of  
10 the traffic tribunal. The transcript of any hearing ~~which~~ that formed the basis for the  
11 determination will be reviewed only if it is submitted by the appellant. An appeal shall not be  
12 deemed to be finally submitted until the appellant has submitted all forms or documents required  
13 to be submitted by the clerk of the traffic tribunal or by this section.

14 (d) *Standard of review.* The judge of the district court shall not substitute his or her  
15 judgment for that of the appeals panel as to the weight of the evidence on questions of fact. The  
16 district court judge may affirm the decision of the appeals panel, or may remand the case for  
17 further proceedings or reverse or modify the decision if the substantial rights of the appellant  
18 have been ~~prejudicial~~ prejudiced because the appeals panel's findings, inferences, conclusions or  
19 decisions are:

- 20 (1) In violation of constitutional or statutory provisions;
- 21 (2) In excess of the statutory authority of the appeals panel;
- 22 (3) Made upon unlawful procedure;
- 23 (4) Affected by other error of law;
- 24 (5) Clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative, and substantial evidence on the  
25 whole record; or
- 26 (6) Arbitrary or capricious or characterized by abuse of discretion or clearly  
27 unwarranted exercise of discretion.

28 (e) *Transcript of hearings.* Transcripts of the record of any hearing may be obtained at  
29 the cost of the traffic tribunal, if prepared by the tribunal, or at a rate specified in the contract  
30 between the tribunal and the contractor, if prepared by a private contractor.

31 (f) *Fees.* The fee for filing an appeal shall be twenty-five dollars (\$25.00); and this fee  
32 shall be deposited into the general fund. In addition to the appeal filing fee, the traffic tribunal  
33 shall apply a technology surcharge assessed in accordance with § 8-15-11. No appeal shall be  
34 accepted unless the required fee has been paid or if forma pauperis status has been granted.

1           (g) *Stays pending appeal.* Whenever a determination has not been made within thirty (30)  
2 days after an appeal has been finally submitted, a stay of execution will be deemed granted by  
3 operation of law, and the license, certificate, permit, or privilege affected will be automatically  
4 restored pending final determination by the district court.

5           (h) *Certiorari.* Any person who has exhausted all remedies available to him or her under  
6 the provisions of this section, including an appeal before the district court, may seek review by  
7 petition for writ of certiorari to the supreme court.

1 SECTION 10. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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LC003997  
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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE - COURTS - COURT  
ADMINISTRATION

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1           This act would provide for the processing of electronic payments submitted to all courts  
2 within the unified judicial system and provides for the implementation of technology fees in order  
3 to process electronic payments.

4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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