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LC003287

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IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

RELATING TO ELECTIONS - RESIDENCE OF THOSE IN GOVERNMENT CUSTODY
ACT

Referred To: House Judiciary

SECTION 1. Title 17 of the General Laws entitled "ELECTIONS" is hereby amended by
adding thereto the following chapter:

4 RESIDENCE OF THOSE IN GOVERNMENT CUSTODY ACT

7 **17-30-2. Legislative declaration and findings.** – The purpose of this chapter is to ensure
8 that persons in government custody within the state are counted at their actual residence for
9 redistricting purposes. The general assembly notes that Rhode Island general laws §17-1-3.1
10 provides: "A person's residence for voting purposes is their fixed and established domicile... A
11 person can have only one domicile, and the domicile shall not be considered lost solely by reason
12 of absence for any of the following reasons:... Confinement in a correctional facility..."
13 Investigation has shown that, despite these provisions, the census classifies incarcerated persons
14 as residents of their places of incarceration rather than of their home addresses. The provisions of
15 this act are necessary to provide procedures and duties to correct this discrepancy.

16 **17-30-3. Electronic record.** – The department of corrections shall collect and maintain
17 an electronic record of the legal residence, presumptively outside of the facility, and other
18 demographic data, for any person entering its custody after January 1, 2017. At a minimum, this

1 record shall contain the last known complete street address prior to incarceration, the person's
2 race, whether the person is of Hispanic or Latino origin, and whether the person is over the age of
3 eighteen (18).

4 **17-30-4. Reports to the secretary of state. –** (a) In each year in which the federal
5 decennial census is taken but in which the United States Bureau of the Census allocates
6 incarcerated persons as residents of correctional facilities, the department of corrections shall, by
7 May 1 of that same year, deliver to the secretary of state:

8 (1) The street address of the correctional facility in which such person was incarcerated at
9 the time of such report;

10 (2) The last known address of such person prior to incarceration or other legal residence
11 (if known);

12 (3) The person's race, whether the person is of Hispanic or Latino origin, and whether the
13 person is over the age of eighteen (18), if known;

14 (4) Any additional information as the secretary of state may request pursuant to law.

15 (b) The department shall provide the information specified in §17-30-4(a) in such form as
16 the secretary of state shall specify.

17 (c) Notwithstanding any other provision of the general or public laws to the contrary, the
18 information required to be provided to the secretary of state pursuant to this section shall not
19 include the name of any incarcerated person and shall not allow for the identification of any such
20 person therefrom, except to the department of corrections. The information shall be treated as
21 confidential, and shall not be disclosed by the secretary of state except as redistricting data
22 aggregated by census block for purposes which they may require.

23 **17-30-5. Federal facilities. –** The secretary of state shall request each agency that
24 operates a federal facility in this state that incarcerates persons convicted of a criminal offense to
25 provide the secretary of state with a report including the information listed in §17-30-4.

26 **17-30-6. Requiring use of data in redistricting. –** The secretary of state shall prepare
27 redistricting population data to reflect incarcerated persons at their residential address, pursuant to
28 §17-30-4 and §17-30-5. The data prepared by the secretary of state pursuant to §17-30-4 and §17-
29 30-5 shall be the basis of state house of representative districts, state senate districts, and all local
30 government districts that are based on population. Incarcerated populations residing at unknown
31 geographic locations within the state, as determined under §17-30-5 shall not be used to
32 determine the ideal population of any set of districts, wards, or precincts.

33 **17-30-7. Determinations and data publication by the secretary of state. –** (a) For each
34 person included in a report received under this chapter, the secretary of state shall determine the

1 geographic units for which population counts are reported in the federal decennial census that
2 contain the facility of incarceration and the legal residence as listed according to the report.

3 (b) For each person included in a report received under this chapter, if the legal residence
4 is known and in this state, the secretary of state shall:

5 (1) Ensure that the person is not represented in any population counts reported by the
6 secretary of state for the geographic units that include the facility at which the person was
7 incarcerated, unless that geographic unit also includes the person's legal residence.

8 (2) Ensure that any population counts reported by the secretary of state reflect the
9 person's residential address as reported pursuant to this chapter.

10 (c) For each person included in a report received under this chapter for whom a legal
11 residence is unknown or not in this state, and for all persons reported in the census as residing in a
12 federal correctional facility for whom a report was not provided, the secretary of state shall:

13 (1) Ensure that the person is not represented in any population counts reported by the
14 secretary of state for the geographic units that include the facility at which the person was
15 incarcerated.

16 (2) Allocate the person to a state unit not tied to a specific determined geography, as
17 other state residents with unknown state addresses are allocated, including, but not limited to,
18 military and federal government personnel stationed overseas.

19 (d) The data prepared by the secretary of state pursuant to this section shall be completed
20 and published no later than thirty (30) days from the date that federal decennial data as provided
21 for under Pub. L. 94-171 is published for the state of Rhode Island or forty-five (45) days after
22 passage of this act, whichever is later.

23 **17-30-8. Use in aid.** – The data prepared by the secretary of state as required by §17-30-4
24 and §17-30-5 shall not be used in the distribution of any state or federal aid.

25 **17-30-9. Severability.** – If any provision of this act or the application of any provision of
26 this act to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity shall not affect other
27 provisions or applications of the act that can be given effect without the invalid provision or
28 application, and for this purpose the provisions of this act are severable.

29 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 ELECTIONS - RESIDENCE OF THOSE IN GOVERNMENT CUSTODY
ACT

- 1 This act would require that persons in government custody use their actual residence for
2 census and redistricting purposes. Such information would be determined by the department of
3 corrections and the secretary of state, and forwarded to the United States census bureau.
4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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