

2020 -- H 7200 SUBSTITUTE A

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LC003520/SUB A
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS - MAIL BALLOTS

Introduced By: Representatives Blazejewski, Knight, Ackerman, Speakman, and Williams

Date Introduced: January 22, 2020

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 17-20 of the General Laws entitled "Mail Ballots" is hereby amended
2 by adding thereto the following section:

3 **17-20-2.3. Eligibility for mail ballots in the 2020 primary and general election.**

4 (a) In response to the unique and serious public health circumstances associated with the
5 COVID-19 global pandemic, and notwithstanding any provision in any statute, law, regulation or
6 other provision to the contrary, with respect to the 2020 statewide primary on Tuesday September
7 8, 2020 and the 2020 general election on Tuesday, November 3, 2020 only, every qualified voter
8 shall be deemed to be eligible to vote by mail.

9 (b) With respect to the statewide primary on Tuesday September 8, 2020 and the general
10 election on Tuesday, November 3, 2020 only:

11 (1) The secretary of state shall cause a mail ballot application to be delivered in a timely
12 fashion to every qualified voter; and

13 (2) The following provisions of law relating to mail ballot voting procedures shall be
14 waived:

15 (i) The requirements for eligibility for or validity of mail ballot for every qualified voter
16 set forth in §§ 17-20-2 and 17-20-2.1(d); and

17 (ii) The determination of or certification of eligibility for mail ballots as set forth in §§ 17-
18 20-10 and 17-20-13 or in any other provision of title 17 of the general laws, except for those
19 provisions in § 17-20-10(a) requiring the local board to compare the signature on the ballot

1 application with the signature contained on the original registration card to satisfy itself that the
2 applicant is a qualified voter; and

3 (iii) Any requirement relating to the witnessing or notarization of regular mail ballots as
4 set forth in §§ 17-20-2.1 and 17-20-23 or in any other provision of title 17 of the general laws.

5 (3) Notwithstanding the provisions of chapter 20 of title 17 of the general laws or any
6 provision in any statute, law, regulation or other provision to the contrary, the secretary of state,
7 for the elections specified in subsection (b) of this section, may adopt a temporary procedure
8 whereby mail ballot applications pursuant to this section may be processed centrally by the office
9 of secretary of state, provided that the temporary procedure shall direct that applications deemed
10 insufficient shall be reviewed and rectified by the board of canvassers of the city or town where the
11 voter resides.

12 (4) The secretary of state shall provide a clear and concise explanation and notification to
13 the public of the temporary elections procedures contained in this act on the official website of the
14 office of secretary of state and by any other reasonable means including, but not limited to,
15 conventional and social media, and printed explanation and notification whether distributed or
16 displayed.

17 (c) Any existing state law or regulation relating to the eligibility of a qualified voter for
18 mail ballots shall, for the 2020 statewide primary on Tuesday September 8, 2020 and the 2020
19 general election on Tuesday, November 3, 2020 only, be subject to the conditions and procedures
20 established by this section.

21 (d) The board of elections shall provide for secure mail ballot drop boxes at the board of
22 canvassers at each city or town hall. The board of elections shall also establish procedures for
23 securing the mail ballot drop boxes at 8:00 p.m. at the close of the polls.

24 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage and the provisions of this act shall
25 expire on November 4, 2020.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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1 This act would authorize every qualified voter to vote by mail ballot for the 2020 statewide
2 primary election on Tuesday, September 8, 2020, and for the general election conducted on
3 Tuesday, November 3, 2020. The authorization would be limited to the specified primary and
4 general election.

5 This act would take effect upon passage and the provisions of this act would expire on
6 November 4, 2020.

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