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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

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A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

Introduced By: Senators Raptakis, and McCaffrey

Date Introduced: February 25, 2020

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

(Board of Elections)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 17-9.1-8 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-9.1 entitled "Registration  
2 of Voters" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **17-9.1-8. Registration at designated agencies.**

4 (a) Every person who is or may be by the next general election qualified to vote may  
5 register to vote when being discharged from incarceration or when applying for services or  
6 assistance at any of the following offices:

7 (1) Any office in the state that provides public assistance;

8 (2) At or through any offices in the state that provide state funded programs primarily  
9 engaged in providing services to persons with disabilities;

10 (3) At armed forces recruitment offices, subject to procedures developed by the state board  
11 in cooperation with the United States Department of Defense;

12 (4) At or through the department of corrections; and

13 (5) At any other agencies within the state that shall be determined by the state board.

14 (b) Voter registration agencies designated by the state board may include, but are not  
15 limited to:

16 (1) State or local government offices such as public libraries, public schools, offices of city  
17 and towns clerks (including marriage license bureaus), fishing and hunting license bureaus,  
18 government revenue offices, unemployment compensation offices, and offices not described in  
19 subdivision (a)(2) of this section that provide services to persons with disabilities; and

1 (2) Federal and nongovernmental offices, with the agreement of those offices.

2 (c)(1) Persons must be provided this opportunity to register to vote not only at the time of  
3 their original application for services, but also when filing any recertification, renewal, or for a  
4 change of address relating to those services. Agencies providing voter registration assistance must  
5 offer the same degree of assistance to individuals in completing a voter registration form as they  
6 offer to individuals in completing the agency's own forms, unless the applicant refuses the  
7 assistance.

8 (2) Any person who provides voter registration assistance services in an agency is  
9 prohibited from:

10 (i) Seeking to influence an applicant's party preference or party registration;

11 (ii) Displaying any political preference or party allegiance;

12 (iii) Making any statement or taking any action whose purpose or effect is to discourage  
13 the applicant from registering to vote; or

14 (iv) Making any statement or taking any action whose purpose or effect is to lead the  
15 applicant to believe that a decision whether or not to register has any bearing on the availability of  
16 services or benefits or on discharge from incarceration.

17 (d)(1) Those who decline to register to vote must do so in writing or by failing to check a  
18 box on a form containing the question: "If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would  
19 you like to apply to register to vote here today? yes or no".

20 (2) The declination may be included in the agency application for services or on a separate  
21 form provided by the agency, subject to rules and regulations to be adopted by the state board.

22 (3) No information regarding a person's declination to register to vote may be used for any  
23 purpose other than voter registration. If an individual does register to vote, the particular agency at  
24 which the applicant submits a voter registration application may not be publicly disclosed.

25 (4) The declination form to be used at agencies providing public or publicly funded  
26 assistance shall also contain the following statements and information:

27 (i) "Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of  
28 assistance that you will be provided by this agency"; or, for those forms made available by the  
29 department of corrections. "Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect your  
30 discharge from incarceration";

31 (ii) "If you do not check either box, you will be considered to have decided not to register  
32 to vote at this time." (with "yes" and "no" boxes being provided);

33 (iii) "If you would like help filling out the voter registration application form, we will help  
34 you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the application form in

1 private";

2 (iv) "If you believe that someone has interfered with your right to register or to decline to  
3 register to vote, your right to privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to  
4 vote, or your right to choose your own political party or other political preference, you may file a  
5 complaint with the State Board of Elections, ~~50 Branch Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island 02904~~  
6 [2000 Plainfield Pike, Cranston, Rhode Island 02921](http://www.sbe.state.rh.us), (401) 222-2345, ~~(401) 222-2239 TDD~~";

7 (v) A statement that if the applicant declines to register to vote, his or her decision will  
8 remain confidential and be used only for voter registration purposes; and

9 (vi) A statement that if the applicant does register to vote, information regarding the agency  
10 to which the application was submitted will remain confidential, to be used only for voter  
11 registration purposes.

12 (e)(1) The registration form to be provided in these agencies shall be the mail registration  
13 form adopted by the state board. Unless the registrant refuses to permit the agency to transmit the  
14 form to the state board or local board where the applicant resides, the agency shall transmit the  
15 completed registration form to the state board or any local board. However, if the registrant refuses,  
16 the registrant may either mail the form to the state board or any local board or may provide for  
17 delivery of the form to the state board or any local board either in person or through a third party.  
18 It shall be the responsibility of all state or state funded agencies to have available at all times a  
19 sufficient number of voter registration forms in order to carry out the provisions of this section.

20 (2) Unless the applicant refuses to permit the agency to transmit the completed voter  
21 registration form to the state board or to a local board, the agency shall be required to transmit the  
22 registration form within ten (10) days after acceptance, or if accepted on the last day or within five  
23 (5) days before the last day to register for an election, within five (5) days of acceptance.

24 (f) The department of corrections and each agency designated by the board to register  
25 persons to vote when applying for services or assistance shall report to the state board:

26 (1) The number of persons applying for services and assistance or the number of persons  
27 discharged from incarceration following felony convictions who are eligible to vote;

28 (2) The number of persons who have been registered to vote at that agency;

29 (3) The number of forms that have been transmitted by the agency to the state or local  
30 board; and

31 (4) The number of persons who have declined to register to vote at that agency. Reports to  
32 the state board by each designated agency shall be on a quarterly basis.

33 (g) Any person who has fully and correctly completed an application to register to vote at  
34 a designated agency is presumed to be registered as of the date of the acceptance of the registration

1 by the designated agency, subject to verification of the registration by the state board or any local  
2 board as provided in § 17-9.1-25.

3 (h) If a voter registration agency which is primarily engaged in providing services to  
4 persons with disabilities provides those services at the person's home, the agency shall provide the  
5 voter registration services authorized by this section at the person's home.

6 (i) The state board of elections shall have the authority to adopt regulations to implement  
7 and administer the provisions of this section, including all registrations taken at designated  
8 agencies.

9 (j) In cases where the findings required by subdivision 17-6-1.2(a)(4) have been made,  
10 transmission shall be made by electronic means as prescribed by the secretary of state, and shall be  
11 in an electronic form compatible with the voter registration system maintained by the secretary of  
12 state.

13 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 -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

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- 1           This act would change the address of the board of elections to their new location in
- 2 Cranston in the "registration of voters" chapter.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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