

2025 -- S 0520

LC002175

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- MAIL BALLOTS

Introduced By: Senators Bissailon, Pearson, Gu, Lawson, Burke, and McKenney

Date Introduced: February 26, 2025

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 17-20-9 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-20 entitled "Mail Ballots"  
2 is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 ~~17-20-9. Application by permanently disabled or incapacitated voters and nursing~~  
4 ~~home residents. Application to be placed on the permanent mail ballot application list.~~

5 (a) A voter ~~who is indefinitely confined because of physical illness or infirmity or is~~  
6 ~~disabled for an indefinite period or who is a long-term resident in a nursing home, may~~, by signing  
7 ~~an affidavit to that effect~~ an application, may request that a mail ballot application be sent to him  
8 or her automatically for every election. The ~~affidavit form~~ application and instructions shall be  
9 prescribed by the secretary of state, and furnished upon request to any elector by each local board  
10 of canvassers. The envelope containing the mail ballot application shall be clearly marked as not  
11 forwardable. If any elector is no longer an eligible voter ~~indefinitely confined or is no longer~~  
12 ~~residing in a nursing home~~, he or she shall notify ~~the clerk of~~ the local board of canvassers of this  
13 fact. The ~~clerk~~ local board shall remove the name of any voter from the mailing list established  
14 under this section upon receipt of reliable information that a voter no longer qualifies for the  
15 service. The voter shall be notified of the action within five (5) days after the board takes the action.

16 (b) The ~~affidavit form~~ application and instructions prescribed in this section shall be mailed  
17 to the applicant along with a stamped return envelope addressed to the local boards of canvassers.  
18 The secretary of state may process applications pursuant to this section through the online mail  
19 ballot application portal established by § 17-20-2.3.

1           (c) ~~For purposes of this section, “nursing home” refers to facilities defined and licensed by~~  
2 ~~the department of health. “Long term” excludes any residents temporarily residing in such a facility~~  
3 ~~for rehabilitation.~~

4           (d) The secretary of state shall maintain a list in the central voter registration system of all  
5 voters who automatically receive applications for mail ballots, pursuant to this section.

6           (e) *[Expires December 31, 2025.]* Eligible disabled voters shall be entitled to electronically  
7 receive and return their mail ballot, using the same electronic transmission system as that used by  
8 voters covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). This  
9 electronic process shall satisfy the federal Rehabilitation Act, section 508 concerning accessibility  
10 standards.

11           (f) *[Expires December 31, 2025.]* For purposes of this section, “eligible disabled voter”  
12 means a person with disabilities eligible to vote who is incapacitated to such an extent that it would  
13 be an undue hardship to vote at the polls because of illness, mental or physical disability, blindness,  
14 or a serious impairment of mobility.

15           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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- 1           This act would modernize and streamline the existing processes for getting on the
- 2 permanent mail ballot application list.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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