

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- THREATS AND EXTORTION

Introduced By: Senators Tikoian, Burke, McKenney, Famiglietti, LaMountain, Gallo,
Thompson, Dimitri, Ciccone, and Patalano

Date Introduced: March 04, 2026

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 11-42-4 of the General Laws in Chapter 11-42 entitled "Threats and
2 Extortion" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **11-42-4. Threats to public officials.**

4 (a) Whoever knowingly and willfully delivers or conveys, directly or indirectly, a verbal
5 or written threat to take the life of, or to inflict bodily harm upon, a public official or a member of
6 a public official's immediate family because of the performance or nonperformance of some public
7 duty; because of hostility of the person making the threat toward the status or position of the public
8 official; or because of some other factor related to the official's public existence, shall be guilty of
9 a felony and shall be imprisoned for not more than five (5) years, or fined not more than five
10 thousand dollars (\$5,000), or both.

11 (b) Whoever knowingly and willfully delivers or conveys, directly or indirectly, a verbal
12 or written threat to take the life of, or to inflict bodily harm upon, any election official, or a member
13 of their immediate family because of the performance or nonperformance of their public duty;
14 because of hostility of the person making the threat toward the status or position of the election
15 official; or because of some other factor related to the election official's public existence, shall be
16 guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be imprisoned for not more than one year, or fined not more than
17 one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or both.

18 (c) For purposes of this section:

19 (1) "Public official" means a person who is elected or appointed to office in accordance

1 with the constitution, a statute, or a city or town charter, or who is a judge, magistrate, assistant
2 attorney general, special assistant attorney general, or law enforcement officer, or in the case of
3 schools and local education agencies (“LEAs”), a school superintendent, central office official,
4 school principal, and all other school employees or in the case of an elective office, any person who
5 has filed the required documents for nomination or election to that office or who is appointed by
6 the governor to serve as the director or their designee of a state department that is established and
7 the qualifications and duties of which are prescribed by statute to discharge a public duty for the
8 state of Rhode Island;

9 (2) “Election official” means a person who is appointed, hired, or assigned to any polling
10 place and includes, but is not limited to, any poll worker, election worker, warden, moderator, clerk,
11 and any member of the board of canvassers, in accordance with any statute, town charter, or
12 ordinance and whose qualifications and duties are prescribed by statute, town charter, or ordinance;

13 (3) “Immediate family” means a public official’s spouse, child, or children.

14 (4) In the case of schools and local education agencies, a school superintendent, central
15 office official, school principal, and all other school employees, a suspect shall be charged under
16 this section only if the suspect is eighteen (18) years of age or older or is otherwise considered a
17 legal adult and is not a student within the LEA where the threat is allegedly made. No student
18 enrolled or matriculating within the LEA where the threat is allegedly made shall be charged under
19 the provisions of this section.

20 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 add school superintendents, central office officials, school principals, and
2 all other school employees, to the definition of a "public official" for purposes of the criminal
3 prohibition against making threats to public officials. In the case of an alleged threat against these
4 persons, a suspect would be charged only if the suspect is eighteen (18) years of age or older and
5 is not a student within the local education agency ("LEA") where the threat is allegedly made. No
6 student enrolled or matriculating at the LEA would be charged under the provisions of this act.

7 This act would take effect upon passage.

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