

2020 -- H 7901 SUBSTITUTE A

LC004819/SUB A

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

Introduced By: Representatives Serodio, and Noret

Date Introduced: February 26, 2020

Referred To: House 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, (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. Section 17-14-7 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-14 entitled "Nomination
14 of Party and Independent Candidates" is hereby amended to read as follows:

15 **17-14-7. Number of signers required for nomination papers.**

16 (a) United States senator or governor. The nomination papers of a candidate for the party
17 nomination or an independent candidate for presidential elector, United States senator, or governor
18 shall be signed, in the aggregate, by at least one thousand (1,000) voters. Notwithstanding the
19 foregoing, for the 2020 election only, the nomination papers of a candidate for the party nomination
20 or an independent candidate for United States senator shall be signed, in the aggregate, by at least
21 five hundred (500) voters.

22 (b) Representative in Congress. The nomination papers of a candidate for the party
23 nomination or an independent candidate for representative in congress shall be signed, in the
24 aggregate, by at least five hundred (500) voters. Notwithstanding the foregoing, for the 2020
25 election only, the nomination papers of a candidate for the party nomination or an independent
26 candidate for representative in Congress shall be signed, in the aggregate, by at least two hundred
27 fifty (250) voters.

28 (c) General state offices. The nomination papers of a candidate for the party nomination or
29 an independent candidate for any of the general offices of the state, excluding governor, shall be
30 signed, in the aggregate, by at least five hundred (500) voters.

31 (d) State senator. The nomination papers of a candidate for a party nomination or
32 independent candidate for senator in any senatorial district shall be signed, in the aggregate, by at
33 least one hundred (100) voters of the senatorial district.

34 (e) State representative. The nomination papers of a candidate for party nomination or an

1 independent candidate for a member of the house of representatives from any representative district
2 shall be signed, in the aggregate, by at least fifty (50) voters of the representative district.

3 (f) City offices. The nomination papers of a candidate for party nomination or an
4 independent candidate for any local office to be filled by the voters of any city at large shall be
5 signed, in the aggregate, by at least two hundred (200) voters of the city, provided that in the city
6 of Newport, for at-large candidates or candidates for school committee, at least one hundred (100)
7 signatures shall be required; provided, further, that in the city of Woonsocket, for candidates for
8 citywide nonpartisan office, including city council, mayor, and candidates for school committee, if
9 elected, at least one hundred (100) signatures shall be required; and provided, further that in the
10 city of Providence, at least five hundred (500) signatures shall be required.

11 (g) Voting district moderator or clerk. The nomination papers for a candidate for voting
12 district moderator or clerk in any town shall be signed, in the aggregate, by at least ten (10) voters
13 of the voting district.

14 (h) Other offices. The nomination papers of a candidate for party nomination for other
15 offices covered by § 17-15-7, or for the election of delegates or for unendorsed party committee
16 candidates, shall be signed, in the aggregate, by fifty (50) voters.

17 SECTION 3. Section 17-20-19 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-20 entitled "Mail
18 Ballots" is hereby amended to read as follows:

19 **17-20-19. Envelopes for return of ballots.**

20 Envelopes for the enclosure and return of mail ballots and their enclosing certified envelope
21 shall have the printed or written address: "Board of Elections, ~~50 Branch Ave.~~ [2000 Plainfield Pike,](#)
22 ~~Providence~~ [Cranston](#), Rhode Island ~~02904-2790~~ [02921](#)" [or a post office box established and](#)
23 [maintained by the board](#); and shall be forwarded by the secretary of state to each mail voter whose
24 application for the mail ballot has been received and accepted.

25 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

=====
LC004819/SUB A
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

1 This act would update the mailing address of the board of elections to 2000 Plainfield Pike,
2 Cranston, RI 02921 for the return of mail ballots and for the purpose of voter registration at
3 designated agencies, and would reduce the number of signatures required of candidates for senator
4 and representative in Congress for the 2020 election only.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC004819/SUB A
=====