

2024 -- S 2208

LC004200

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- VOTING DISTRICTS AND OFFICIALS

Introduced By: Senators F. Lombardi, LaMountain, Tikoian, Britto, Cano, and Felag

Date Introduced: January 24, 2024

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 17-11-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-11 entitled "Voting
2 Districts and Officials" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **17-11-1. Division of towns and representative district into voting districts.**

4 (a) The local board of any city or town may, on or before the sixtieth (60th) day preceding
5 any election, divide or redivide the city or town, or any representative district in the city or town,
6 into voting districts. The local board of each city or town shall determine voting districts by
7 geographical boundaries and by no other means. No voting district shall at any time comprise parts
8 of two (2) or more wards. It shall be the duty of the board to divide the city or town, representative
9 district, or ward so that substantially not more than three thousand (3,000) total active, eligible
10 registered voters shall be served by the same polling place; provided, however, that any divisions
11 conducted by the local board pursuant to this section shall not result in creating a polling place
12 serving less than five hundred (500) total eligible registered voters, except when a polling place is
13 located in a low-income or elderly residential development, or when it is caused by legislative
14 district boundaries; and provided, further, that no existing polling place that is presently located in
15 a low-income or elderly residential development shall be eliminated. Upon the establishment and
16 approval of any polling place by the state board, changes to the polling place shall not be allowed
17 until the next redistricting by the general assembly, unless the polling place becomes unavailable
18 to the city or town or no longer meets polling place minimum requirements as established by the
19 state board, then the city or town may take the appropriate action to replace the polling place. A

1 polling place may be located either within or without the voting district for which it is established;
2 provided, that a polling place may be located outside the district only upon unanimous
3 determination of the local board and subject to the approval of the state board that a suitable place
4 is not available within the voting district.

5 (b) **Uniform standards for polling place location.** When cities and towns shall, subject
6 to the approval of the state board, designate polling locations in accordance with the provisions of
7 this section and § 17-19-3.2, they shall take into account the following factors:

8 (1) Accessibility of the polling place to historically disenfranchised communities,
9 including cultural groups, ethnic groups, and minority groups;

10 (2) Proximity of polling places to dense concentrations of voters;

11 (3) Accessibility of polling places by public transportation;

12 (4) Ensuring equitable distribution of polling places in the city or town; and

13 (5) Maximizing voter participation, including through the use of community centers and
14 public gathering places as polling places.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
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- 1 This act would clarify that the calculation for the total number of eligible voters to be served
- 2 by the same polling place shall be established using active voters.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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