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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016

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A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS - REGISTRATIONS OF VOTERS

Introduced By: Representatives Regunberg, Keable, Handy, Blazejewski, and Barros

Date Introduced: January 07, 2016

Referred To: Committee on Judiciary

(Secretary of State)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 17-9.1-10 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-9.1 entitled  
2 "Registration of Voters" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **17-9.1-10. Additional method of registering.** -- (a) In addition to the methods for  
4 registering to vote provided in §§ 17-9.1-7, 17-9.1-8, ~~and~~ 17-9.1-9, [and 17-9.1-34](#), whenever any  
5 person who is or may be by the next election qualified to vote desires to register, that person may  
6 appear before the local board of the city or town in which he or she has his or her residence, as  
7 defined in § 17-1-3.1, or before the clerk or other duly authorized agent of the board, or before a  
8 registrar appointed by the state board of elections, and shall furnish the information required of  
9 him or her by this chapter and any information described in §§ 17-9.1-23 and 17-9.1-24 that the  
10 registrant may wish to record, and after the information has been recorded on the registry card  
11 furnished for that purpose, the person shall sign his or her name and certify to the truth of the  
12 facts recorded in the appropriate spaces in the card; provided, whenever any person is unable to  
13 sign his or her name because of physical incapacity or otherwise, he or she shall make his mark  
14 "(X)", which shall be witnessed by the person receiving the registration.

15 (b) It shall be the duty of the local board or clerk or other duly authorized agent of the  
16 board or registrar of the state board of elections to inform the person registering to vote that the  
17 voter will be mailed an acknowledgement card advising the person of the disposition of the  
18 registration and in the process verifying that the person resides at the address provided on the  
19 registration form. The person shall also be advised that if the acknowledgement card is returned

1 as undeliverable, the person will be placed on the inactive list of voters pending the results of the  
2 confirmation process described in § 17-9.1-26. Nothing contained in this section shall be deemed  
3 to entitle a person to vote whose registration form has not been filed with the local board at least  
4 thirty (30) days before an election.

5 SECTION 2. Chapter 17-9.1 of the General Laws entitled "Registration of Voters" is  
6 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

7 **17-9.1-34. Electronic registration of voters.** -- (a) The secretary of state shall establish,  
8 maintain and administer a portal for electronic voter registration. An applicant may use such  
9 portal to register to vote, or to update existing voter registration information, provided:

10 (1) The applicant's information is verifiable in the manner described in subsection (b) of  
11 this section;

12 (2) The applicant's signature is in a database described in subsection (b) of this section;  
13 and

14 (3) Such signature may be imported into such system for electronic voter registration.

15 (b) Upon request of the secretary of state, a state agency, quasi-public agency or  
16 municipality shall provide information to the secretary of state that the secretary of state deems  
17 necessary to maintain the system for electronic voter registration, and the information so obtained  
18 shall be used for no other purpose. The secretary of state shall verify applicant information by  
19 cross-referencing information submitted by applicants with data or information contained in any  
20 state agency's, quasi-public agency's or municipality's database or a database administered by the  
21 federal government, or any voter registration database of another state. The secretary of state shall  
22 not use the information obtained from any such databases except to verify information submitted  
23 by the applicant. The applicant's signature, if part of the data contained in the state agency's,  
24 quasi-public agency's or municipality's database, shall be included as part of the applicant's  
25 information contained in the system for electronic voter registration. No information viewed or  
26 received by the secretary of state pursuant to this subsection may be transferred to, shared with or  
27 otherwise conveyed to any other governmental or non-governmental entity for any reason except  
28 for voter registration purposes or pursuant to a court order.

29 (c) The submission of an electronic application shall contain all of the information that is  
30 required for an application under §17-9.1-9, with the exception of the signature which shall be  
31 obtained from another state agency, quasi-public agency, or municipality's database pursuant to  
32 subsection (b) of this section.

33 (d) An applicant using the system shall mark the box associated with the following  
34 statement included as part of the electronic application:

1 "By clicking on the box below, I swear or affirm all of the following under penalty of  
2 perjury:

3 (1) I am the person whose name and identifying information is provided on this form, and  
4 I desire to register to vote or update my voter registration information in the state of Rhode  
5 Island.

6 (2) All of the information I have provided on this form is true and correct as of the date I  
7 am submitting this form.

8 (3) I authorize a Rhode Island state agency, quasi-public agency, or municipality to  
9 transmit, for voter registration purposes, to the secretary of state and my city's/town's board of  
10 canvassers my signature that is on file with such state agency, quasi-public agency or  
11 municipality. I understand that the secretary of state and my city's/town's board of canvassers will  
12 use such signature on this electronic voter registration application as if I had signed this form  
13 personally."

14 (e) Upon approval of such application, the boards of canvassers shall send a confirmation  
15 notice to the applicant.

16 (f) The secretary of state may enter into an agreement and exchange information or data  
17 with any other state exclusively for the purposes of updating the statewide central voter register  
18 and registering voters, provided such activities are performed under the supervision of the  
19 secretary of state and the secretary of state enters into an agreement to protect the confidentiality  
20 of such information or data. A Rhode Island state agency shall provide the secretary of state with  
21 information or data to be used exclusively for voter registration purposes and shall advise the  
22 secretary of state if such information or data is held confidential. The secretary of state shall not  
23 use or transmit the information or data for any purpose except for voter registration purposes or  
24 pursuant to a court order.

25 (g) To ensure full, equal and independent access to all voters with disabilities, any  
26 Internet site and voter registration form created to register voters electronically or allow voters to  
27 update their voter registration shall comply with all requirements under Title II of the Americans  
28 with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§12131-12165, and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines  
29 (WCAG) 2.0 compliance level AA. Experts concerning disability and usability access to websites  
30 shall be included in the development of any voter registration website and voter registration form,  
31 and shall verify accessibility and usability before the website, or an updated version of the  
32 website, is made available to the general public.

33 (h) The website and form shall be available in any language required by federal or state  
34 voting rights laws.

1 SECTION 3. 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 - REGISTRATIONS OF VOTERS

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1           This act would require the secretary of state to establish a system to provide for the  
2 electronic registration of voters. The act would limit the use or transfer of the information  
3 supplied by the registering voter.

4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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