

2019 -- H 5292

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

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A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- CONDUCT OF ELECTION AND VOTING EQUIPMENT,  
AND SUPPLIES

Introduced By: Representatives Solomon, Blazejewski, Barros, Phillips, and Hawkins

Date Introduced: February 06, 2019

Referred To: House Judiciary

(Secretary of State)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Chapter 17-19 of the General Laws entitled "Conduct of Election and  
2   Voting Equipment, and Supplies" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3           **17-19-24.4. In-person early voting.**

4           (a) In-person early voting shall be made available to any registered voter and eligible  
5 elector of this state whose name appears upon the official voting list of the city or town where the  
6 elector is so qualified to vote for all elections.

7           (b) The in-person early voting period shall begin on the twentieth day before a primary or  
8 general election and extend through four o'clock (4:00) p.m. on the day before the primary or  
9 general election.

10          (c) During the in-person early voting period as set forth in subsection (b) of this section,  
11 in-person early voting shall take place at locations to be determined by each local board and  
12 approved by the state board, with at least one location for each town or city. Prior to the  
13 beginning of the in-person early voting period, a notice shall be published by the secretary of  
14 state in a newspaper or newspapers having aggregate general circulation throughout the state at  
15 least three (3) days prior to the beginning of the in-person early voting period. Adequate notice of  
16 at least seven (7) days shall be posted at each local board's office and the city or town's website, if  
17 any, informing the public of the locations where in-person early voting is being conducted. Notice  
18 of the in-person early voting period for each city or town shall also be posted on the website of

1 the secretary of state, and the board of elections website.

2 Effective January 1, 2020, in-person early voting shall take place during normal business  
3 hours in each city or town on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday during the  
4 twenty (20) day in-person early voting period. In-person early voting shall take place on the  
5 Saturday preceding a primary or general election day during the hours of twelve o'clock (12:00)  
6 p.m. to four o'clock (4:00) p.m. and on the Sunday preceding a primary or general election day  
7 during the hours of twelve o'clock (12:00) p.m. to four o'clock (4:00) p.m. during the twenty (20)  
8 day in-person early voting period.

9 Nothing contained herein shall be construed to prohibit a municipality from including  
10 additional days and times where early voting is available during the in-person early voting period.  
11 A municipality may establish an in-person early voting period for any special election.

12 (d) Prior to the in-person early voting period, the state board shall provide the local  
13 boards with the ballots, ballot on-demand printers, ballot applications, tabulation equipment,  
14 ballot storage boxes, voting booths, electronic poll books, instructions as to voting, and other  
15 supplies necessary to effectuate the provisions of this section. During the in-person early voting  
16 period, the state board shall provide technical support as needed at in-person early voting sites.

17 (e) The secretary shall make available no later than the next business day, the updated list  
18 of those persons that have cast their ballot during the in-person early voting period.

19 (f) At the conclusion of the early voting period the local board shall note on the  
20 appropriate electronic or paper-based voter roll that the voter has cast an early vote so as to  
21 prevent the voter from casting an additional vote at the polls on election day.

22 (g) The procedure for voting during the in-person early voting period shall be established  
23 through rules promulgated by the state board.

24 (h) The secretary of state and state board shall convene an in-person early voting advisory  
25 committee to assist in the drafting of rules for the in-person early voting period. The advisory  
26 committee shall be comprised of the following:

27 (1) Secretary of state, or designee;

28 (2) Three (3) representatives of the board of elections;

29 (3) Three (3) representatives of the Rhode Island town and city clerks' association  
30 elections committee appointed by the president of the Rhode Island town and city clerks'  
31 association.

32 (i)(1) The advisory committee shall advise the state board on issues including, but not  
33 limited to:

34 (i) Staffing of in-person early voting locations;

- 1           (ii) [Suitable in-person early voting locations;](#)
- 2           (iii) [Accessibility criteria to be considered for in-person early voting locations.](#)
- 3           (2) [The in-person early voting advisory committee shall sunset on December 31, 2020.](#)

4           SECTION 2. Section 17-20-2.2 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-20 entitled "Mail  
5           Ballots" is hereby amended to read as follows:

6           **17-20-2.2. ~~Requirements for validity of emergency mail ballots.~~ Requirements for**  
7           **validity of emergency mail ballots and emergency mail ballot applications.**

8           (a) Any legally qualified elector of this state whose name appears upon the official voting  
9           list of the town or district of the city or town where the elector is so qualified, ~~who on account of~~  
10           ~~circumstances manifested twenty (20) days or less prior to any election becomes eligible to vote~~  
11           ~~by mail ballot according to this chapter,~~ may obtain from the local board an application for an  
12           emergency mail ballot.

13           (b) The emergency mail ballot application, when duly executed, shall be delivered in  
14           person or by mail so that it shall be received by the local board not later than four o'clock (4:00)  
15           p.m. on the last day preceding the date of the election.

16           (c) The elector shall execute the emergency mail ballot application in accordance with the  
17           requirements of this chapter, ~~which application shall contain a certificate setting forth the facts~~  
18           ~~relating to the circumstances necessitating the application.~~

19           (d) In addition to those requirements set forth elsewhere in this chapter, an emergency  
20           mail ballot, in order to be valid, must have been cast in conformance with the following  
21           procedures:

22           (1) All mail ballots issued pursuant to subdivision 17-20-2(1) shall be mailed to the  
23           elector at the State of Rhode Island address provided on the application by the office of the  
24           secretary of state, or delivered by the local board to a person presenting written authorization  
25           from the elector to receive the ballots, ~~or cast in private at the local board of canvassers.~~ In order  
26           to be valid, the signature of the voter on the certifying envelope containing a voted ballot must be  
27           made before a notary public, or other person authorized by law to administer oaths where signed,  
28           or where the elector voted, or before two (2) witnesses who shall set forth their addresses on the  
29           form. ~~In order to be valid, all ballots sent to the elector at the board of canvassers must be voted~~  
30           ~~in conformance with the provisions of § 17-20-14.2.~~

31           (2) All applications for emergency mail ballots pursuant to subdivision 17-20-2(2) must  
32           state under oath the name and location of the hospital, convalescent home, nursing home, or  
33           similar institution where the elector is confined. All mail ballots issued pursuant to this  
34           subdivision shall be delivered to the elector by the bi-partisan pair of supervisors, appointed in

1 conformance with this chapter, and shall be voted and witnessed in conformance with the  
2 provisions of § 17-20-14.

3 (3) All mail ballots issued pursuant to subdivision 17-20-2(3) shall be mailed by the  
4 office of the secretary of state to the elector at an address provided by the elector on the  
5 application, ~~or cast at the board of canvassers in the city or town where the elector maintains his~~  
6 ~~or her voting residence~~. The signature of the elector on the certifying envelope containing the  
7 voted ballots issued pursuant to the subdivision does not need to be notarized or witnessed. Any  
8 voter qualified to receive a mail ballot pursuant to subdivision 17-20-2(3) shall also be entitled to  
9 cast a ballot pursuant to the provisions of United States Public Law 99-410 ("UOCAVA Act").

10 (4) All mail ballots issued pursuant to subdivision 17-20-2(4) shall be ~~cast at the board of~~  
11 ~~canvassers in the city or town where the elector maintains his or her voting residence or~~ mailed  
12 by the office of the secretary of state to the elector at the address within the United States  
13 provided by the elector on the application, or delivered to the voter by a person presenting written  
14 authorization by the voter to pick up the ballot. In order to be valid, the signature of the voter on  
15 all certifying envelopes containing a voted ballot must be made before a notary public, or other  
16 person authorized by law to administer oaths where signed, or where the elector voted, or before  
17 two (2) witnesses who shall set forth their addresses on the form. ~~In order to be valid, all ballots~~  
18 ~~sent to the elector at the board of canvassers must be voted in conformance with the provisions of~~  
19 ~~§ 17-20-14.2.~~

20 (e) The secretary of state shall provide each of the several boards of canvassers with a  
21 sufficient number of mail ballots for their voting districts so that the local boards may provide the  
22 appropriate ballot or ballots to the applicants. It shall be the duty of each board of canvassers to  
23 process each emergency ballot application in accordance with this chapter, and it shall be the duty  
24 of each board to return to the secretary of state any ballots not issued immediately after each  
25 election.

26 (f) Any person knowingly and willfully making a false application or certification, or  
27 knowingly and willfully aiding and abetting in the making of a false application or certification,  
28 shall be guilty of a felony and shall be subject to the penalties provided for in § 17-26-1.

29 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 -- CONDUCT OF ELECTION AND VOTING EQUIPMENT,  
AND SUPPLIES

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1           This act would create a process for in-person early voting to be conducted at locations  
2 determined by local boards and approved by the state board and would amend provisions related  
3 to mail ballots.

4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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