

2023 -- H 5460

LC000832

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- VOTING DISTRICTS AND OFFICIALS -- POLLING PLACE  
CAP

Introduced By: Representatives Baginski, Noret, Potter, and Edwards

Date Introduced: February 08, 2023

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

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 (3000)~~ three thousand five  
10 hundred (3,500) total eligible registered voters shall be served by the same polling place; provided,  
11 however, that any divisions conducted by the local board pursuant to this section shall not result in  
12 creating a polling place serving less than five hundred (500) total eligible registered voters, except  
13 when a polling place is located in a low-income or elderly residential development, or when it is  
14 caused by legislative district boundaries; and provided, further, that no existing polling place which  
15 is presently located in a low-income or elderly residential development shall be eliminated. Upon  
16 the establishment and approval of any polling place by the state board, changes to the polling place  
17 shall not be allowed until the next redistricting by the general assembly, unless the polling place  
18 becomes unavailable to the city or town, or no longer meets polling place minimum requirements

1 as established by the state board, then the city or town may take the appropriate action to replace  
2 the polling place. A polling place may be located either within or without the voting district for  
3 which it is established; provided, that a polling place may be located outside the district only upon  
4 unanimous determination of the local board and subject to the approval of the state board that a  
5 suitable place is not available within the voting district.

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 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 increase the maximum number of voters that a polling place can  
2 accommodate from three thousand (3,000) to three thousand five hundred (3,500) and would  
3 provide factors to consider when designating polling locations, taking into account accessibility of  
4 the polling location to disenfranchised communities, proximity to dense concentration of voters,  
5 accessibility to public transportation and maximizing voter participation.

6           This act would take effect upon passage.

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