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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- NOMINATION OF PARTY AND INDEPENDENT
CANDIDATES

Introduced By: Representatives Voas, Potter, Kazarian, Alzate, and Stewart

Date Introduced: March 14, 2025

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

(Secretary of State)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 17-14-4, 17-14-7, 17-14-8, 17-14-11, 17-14-12 and 17-14-13 of the
2 General Laws in Chapter 17-14 entitled "Nomination of Party and Independent Candidates" are
3 hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **17-14-4. Preparation of nomination papers for candidates — Combination of**
5 **endorsed candidates — Furnishing of nomination papers to candidates. [Effective January 1,**
6 **2025.]**

7 (a) Upon receipt of the declarations referred to in § 17-14-1, within two (2) business days
8 of the final date for filing endorsements, the secretary of state for statewide candidates and the local
9 board for general assembly and local candidates shall prepare nomination papers for each person
10 who has filed a declaration of candidacy as provided in § 17-14-1. A minimum of three (3) sets of
11 nomination papers shall be prepared for each candidate whose name appears on nomination papers
12 containing the name of a candidate for general assembly and for local office. Nomination papers
13 for voters from the city of Providence for the offices enumerated in § 17-14-1 shall be furnished by
14 the secretary of state. Nomination papers shall be prepared with the name of the candidate as it
15 appears on the voting list, notwithstanding that the candidate may have signed their declaration of
16 candidacy other than as the candidate's name appears on the voting list. Candidates for nomination
17 for different offices endorsed by the appropriate committee of any party shall be combined on the
18 same nomination papers. The names of candidates for different offices not endorsed by the

1 appropriate committee of any party shall not be combined on the same nomination papers.
2 Nomination papers for candidates for general assembly shall be furnished by the local board of the
3 general assembly candidate. Nomination papers shall be furnished to the local boards by the
4 secretary of state and each shall bear the imprint of the state coat of arms and any additional
5 language required by law. Nomination papers shall be appropriately marked or color coded to
6 indicate the different political parties, the endorsed and unendorsed candidates of those parties, and
7 independent candidates.

8 (b) Candidates for nomination may, at their own expense, have nomination papers
9 duplicated in exact appearance and as prescribed in subsection (a) of this section.

10 (c) Nomination papers furnished by the secretary of state shall be personally issued to the
11 candidate, or in the case of combined nomination papers to one of the candidates, for whom they
12 were prepared, or to an individual presenting written authorization from the candidate, or one of
13 the candidates appearing on them, to receive the nomination papers.

14 [\(d\) During the timeframe prescribed in subsection \(a\) of this section and pursuant to § 17-](#)
15 [14-4.2, the secretary of state shall make available the online nomination paper portal for voters to](#)
16 [electronically sign nomination papers of the candidate\(s\) for any office the voter may lawfully vote](#)
17 [for at the general election.](#)

18 ~~**17-14-7. Number of signers required for nomination papers. Number of signers**~~
19 ~~**required for nomination papers and online nomination portal.**~~

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

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

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

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

4 (e) State representative. The nomination papers of a candidate for party nomination or an
5 independent candidate for a member of the house of representatives from any representative district
6 shall be signed, in the aggregate, by at least fifty (50) voters of the representative district.

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

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

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

21 [\(i\) Electronic signatures via the online nomination paper portal pursuant to § 17-14-4.2\(a\)](#)
22 [shall count towards a candidate's aggregate total signatures as prescribed in subsections \(a\) through](#)
23 [\(h\) of this section.](#)

24 **17-14-8. ~~Signing of nomination papers.~~ Signing of nomination papers and electronic**
25 **signature(s) in the online nomination paper portal.**

26 Not all endorsers of a candidate need sign on the same nomination papers, but endorsers
27 who are voters in different cities and towns shall not sign the same sheet. Every voter signing a
28 nomination paper shall sign in person with his or her name, place of residence, and street number,
29 as it appears on the voting list. The signature shall be accepted as valid if it can be reasonably
30 identified to be the signature of the voter it purports to be. A variation of the voter's signature by
31 the insertion or omission of identifying titles or by the substitution of initials for the first or middle
32 names, or both, shall not in itself be grounds for invalidation of the signature. Any voter who is
33 unable to write may sign by making his or her mark "X" on the nomination paper in the presence
34 of two (2) witnesses who shall subscribe their names on the paper as witnesses to the signing. [For](#)

1 [voters who electronically sign nomination papers using the online nomination paper portal, the](#)
2 [voter's electronic signature shall be accepted if the voter meets all of the requirements prescribed](#)
3 [by § 17-14-4.2\(d\).](#)

4 **17-14-11. Checking and certification of nomination papers — Challenge. [Effective**
5 **January 1, 2025.]**

6 (a) Each nomination paper, [including those on the online nomination paper portal](#), for party
7 and independent candidates shall be submitted before four o'clock (4:00) p.m. on the sixtieth (60th)
8 day before the primary to the local board of the city or town where the signers appear to be voters
9 or, in the case of special elections for state and local office, on the twenty-eighth (28th) day before
10 the primary, or in the case of special elections for federal office, on the fifty-third (53rd) day before
11 the primary. Nomination papers, [including those on the online nomination paper portal](#), for
12 independent presidential candidates and presidential candidates of political parties, other than those
13 defined in § 17-1-2(9), shall be filed not later than sixty (60) days prior to the general election. Each
14 local board shall immediately proceed to check signatures on each nomination paper filed with it
15 [and each electronic signature submitted via the online nomination paper portal](#) against the voting
16 list as last canvassed or published according to law.

17 (b) The local boards shall certify a sufficient number of names appearing on the nomination
18 papers [and via the online nomination paper portal](#) that are in conformity with the requirements of
19 § 17-14-8 to qualify the candidate for a position on the ballot, and after considering any challenge
20 under this section and, if necessary, certifying any additional valid names, shall immediately file
21 nomination papers for statewide office, general assembly, and state and district committee
22 candidates with the secretary of state; provided, that nomination papers for local candidates shall
23 be retained by the local board.

24 (c) If any candidate or an individual presenting written authorization from the candidate,
25 or the chairperson of any party committee questions the validity or authenticity of any signature on
26 the nomination paper [or electronic signature via the online nomination paper portal](#), the local board
27 shall immediately and summarily decide the question, and for this purpose, shall have the same
28 powers as are conferred upon the board by the provisions of § 17-14-14.

29 (d) If any challenged signature [or electronic signature](#) is found to be invalid, for any reason
30 in law, or forged, then the signature [or electronic signature](#) shall not be counted.

31 (e) The local canvassing clerk shall immediately notify the state board in writing and via
32 electronic mail if the local canvassing clerk suspects a consistent pattern of forgery as prescribed
33 by § 17-23-17 on the nomination papers [or in the online nomination paper portal](#) of a local, state,
34 or federal candidate.

1 (1) The state board, upon notification of allegations of any consistent pattern of suspected
2 forged signatures on nomination papers [or electronic signatures via the online nomination paper](#)
3 [portal](#) of a local, state, or federal candidate, shall review the allegations and, if determined to be
4 with reasonable cause, shall, as soon as feasible notify all corresponding local canvassing clerks of
5 the allegations of suspected forgery.

6 (2) The state board, if it deems necessary, shall order a review of all nomination papers of
7 a local, state, or federal candidate whose nomination papers include a consistent pattern of
8 suspected forged signatures as prescribed in this subsection. [The state board, if it deems necessary,](#)
9 [may order a review of all electronic signatures via the online nomination paper portal.](#) The state
10 board, in consultation with the Elections Committee of the Rhode Island Town and City Clerks'
11 Association, shall promulgate rules and regulations on the process to review nomination papers of
12 a local, state, or federal candidate whose nomination papers include a consistent pattern of
13 suspected forged signatures as prescribed in this subsection.

14 (3) The state board shall explicitly determine and deliver, in writing and via electronic mail
15 to the secretary of state, the findings of the review of the local, state, or federal candidate whose
16 nomination papers include suspected forged signatures as prescribed in this subsection, and whether
17 the determination affects a candidate's qualification for a position on the ballot.

18 **17-14-12. Filing of nomination papers.**

19 All nomination papers, [including those nomination papers on the online nomination paper](#)
20 [portal](#), for state offices or officers and all certified lists of candidates for local offices or officers
21 shall be filed in the office of the secretary of state (the certified lists by the respective local boards),
22 not later than fifty-four (54) days before the date of the primary held to nominate candidates for
23 general election; but when there is a primary to nominate candidates for any office mentioned in §
24 17-15-7 to be voted upon at a special election for state and local office, all nomination papers and
25 lists of local candidates shall be filed in the office on or before the twenty-sixth (26th) day preceding
26 the day of the special primary election, or when there is a primary to nominate candidates for any
27 office listed in § 17-15-7 to be voted upon at a special election for federal office, all nomination
28 papers and lists of local candidates shall be filed in the office on or before the forty-ninth (49th)
29 day preceding the day of the special primary election. Nomination papers, [including those](#)
30 [nomination papers on the online nomination paper portal](#), for independent presidential candidates
31 and presidential candidates of political parties other than those defined in § 17-1-2(9) shall be filed
32 in the office of the secretary of state by the local boards of canvassers not later than fifty-four (54)
33 days before the date of the election.

34 **17-14-13. Objections to eligibility of candidate or sufficiency of papers.**

1 When nomination papers, [including those nomination papers on the online nomination](#)
2 [paper portal](#), have been duly filed and are in apparent conformity with § 17-14-11, they shall be
3 conclusively presumed to be valid, unless written objections to them are made as to the eligibility
4 of the candidate or the sufficiency of the nomination papers or the signatures [including electronic](#)
5 [signatures](#) on them. All objections shall be filed in the office of the secretary of state or of the local
6 board, as the case may be, by four o'clock (4:00) p.m. on the next business day after the last day
7 fixed for filing nomination papers in the appropriate office as provided in this chapter. Nothing in
8 this section shall be construed to prevent the secretary of state or the local board, as the case may
9 be, from disqualifying a candidate based on the determination of the secretary of state or the local
10 board, acting on its own motion, that the candidate is ineligible or the nomination papers or the
11 signatures on them are invalid or insufficient.

12 SECTION 2. Chapter 17-14 of the General Laws entitled "Nomination of Party and
13 Independent Candidates" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following sections:

14 **17-14-4.2. Online nomination paper portal.**

15 [\(a\) In addition to any other available means of signing nomination papers, the secretary of](#)
16 [state shall establish and maintain an online nomination paper portal through which voters may](#)
17 [electronically sign nomination papers of the candidate\(s\) for any office the voter may lawfully vote](#)
18 [for at the general election.](#)

19 [\(b\) The online nomination paper portal shall provide voters the ability to electronically sign](#)
20 [the nomination papers for candidates for any office the voter may lawfully vote for at the general](#)
21 [election. An electronic signature shall be considered the same as the voter's signature on a](#)
22 [nomination paper as prescribed in this chapter.](#)

23 [\(c\) A voter's electronic signature shall be considered submitted on the calendar date and](#)
24 [time the authorization is initially transmitted by the voter through the online nomination paper](#)
25 [portal.](#)

26 [\(d\) A voter shall electronically sign a candidate's nomination paper when the voter:](#)

27 [\(1\) Provides the voter's first name, last name, date of birth, and zip code to access the](#)
28 [online nomination paper portal;](#)

29 [\(2\) Verifies the voter's identity through the online nomination paper portal by providing](#)
30 [the voter's valid Rhode Island driver's license number or state identification number;](#)

31 [\(3\) Selects the intended candidate's name using the online nomination paper portal as](#)
32 [prescribed in this section; and](#)

33 [\(4\) Affirms, subject to penalty of perjury, that the information the voter has provided is](#)
34 [true and accurate to the best of their knowledge and belief.](#)

1 (e) To ensure full, equal, and independent access to all voters with disabilities, the online
2 nomination paper portal shall comply, at minimum, with all requirements under Title II of the
3 Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131-12165, and Web Content Accessibility
4 Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 compliance level AA.

5 (f) The online nomination paper portal shall be fully implemented for the nomination paper
6 process for the 2028 presidential preference primary and all subsequent elections thereafter. This
7 subsection shall not be construed to prohibit the secretary of state from implementing the online
8 nomination paper process for any special election that occurs prior to the 2028 presidential
9 preference primary.

10 (g) The secretary of state may promulgate rules and regulations to establish, maintain, and
11 implement the online nomination paper portal as prescribed in this section.

12 **17-14-9.1. Application of electronic signature(s) via the online nomination paper**
13 **portal.**

14 A voter may electronically sign the nomination paper for any number of candidate(s) for
15 any office the voter may lawfully vote for at the general election.

16 **17-14-10.1. Voter attestation when using the online nomination paper portal.**

17 Voters using the online nomination paper portal shall affirm, subject to penalty of perjury,
18 that the information the voter has provided via the online nomination paper portal is true and
19 accurate to the best of their knowledge and belief. Voters using the online nomination paper portal
20 shall meet all of the requirements prescribed by § 17-14-4.2(d).

21 SECTION 3. Section 17-23-17 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-23 entitled "Election
22 Offenses" is hereby amended to read as follows:

23 **17-23-17. Violations with respect to elections.**

24 (a) Any person is guilty of a felony who:

25 (1) Makes a declaration of candidacy or obtains, circulates, or causes to be circulated his
26 or her nomination papers for an office, knowing or with good reason to know that he or she is not
27 qualified as provided in this title to be his or her party's candidate for the office;

28 (2) Knowingly or without reasonable and proper investigation makes any substantial
29 misstatement in any declaration of candidacy, nomination paper, or affidavit provided for in this
30 title;

31 (3) Signs a nomination paper when he or she knows that he or she is not qualified to sign;

32 (4) Votes or attempts to vote at any election when he or she knows or should know that he
33 or she is not qualified to vote;

34 (5) Votes or attempts to vote more than once at any election, or votes or attempts to vote

1 in more than one political party's primary on the same day;

2 (6) Votes or attempts to vote at any election under the name of any other person;

3 (7) Willfully hinders the orderly conduct of any election;

4 (8) Gives a false answer to any election official relative to his or her right to vote at the

5 election;

6 (9) Aids or abets a person not entitled to vote at any election in voting or attempting to vote

7 under a name other than the voter's name or in voting twice upon the voter's name;

8 (10) Willfully alters or makes any change, erasure, or additional check upon the voting list

9 used or to be used at any election; or

10 (11) Willfully violates any provisions of chapters 12 — 15 of this title for which violation

11 a specific penalty is not provided.

12 (b) Any person who unlawfully and knowingly signs the name of any other person on any

13 nomination papers shall be guilty of a felony.

14 (c) Any public officer or officer of a political party who willfully violates any of the

15 provisions of chapters 12 — 15 of this title, or refuses or willfully neglects and omits to perform,

16 in the manner and within the time prescribed, any duty imposed upon the officer by these chapters,

17 or suffers or permits any alteration, erasure, or additional check to be made upon a voting list in the

18 officer's custody or control, shall be guilty of a felony.

19 [\(d\) For purposes of this chapter, "online nomination paper portal" shall also be construed](#)

20 [to mean a "nomination paper" as prescribed in § 17-14-4.2.](#)

21 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2027.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T
RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- NOMINATION OF PARTY AND INDEPENDENT
CANDIDATES

- 1 This act would make several amendments to provide for an online nomination paper portal
- 2 for election nomination papers.
- 3 This act would take effect on January 1, 2027.

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