

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

H.B. 788
Apr 3, 2025
HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

H

D

HOUSE BILL DRH10316-LUxfaye-53B

Short Title: Fix Our Democracy.

(Public)

Sponsors: Representative Buansi.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT AMENDING THE NORTH CAROLINA CONSTITUTION TO ESTABLISH A
NONPARTISAN REDISTRICTING PROCESS; REENACTING LEGISLATION THAT
ESTABLISHED A NONPARTISAN METHOD FOR JUDICIAL ELECTIONS;
EXTENDING THE WAITING PERIOD FOR FORMER LEGISLATORS WHO BECOME
LOBBYISTS; PROVIDING FOR ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THAT PURPOSE, AND AUTOMATIC VOTER
REGISTRATION; INCREASING TRANSPARENCY BY REQUIRING ADEQUATE
NOTICE OF MEETINGS OF ALL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES AND SESSIONS
OCCURRING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COMPLEX AND REQUIRING LIVE VIDEO
AND AUDIO STREAMING OF ALL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE AND COMMISSION
MEETINGS AND SESSIONS OCCURRING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COMPLEX;
ENSURING VOTING PLACES ON CERTAIN COLLEGE CAMPUSES; PROHIBITING
VOTER ROLL PURGING; MAKING VARIOUS CHANGES TO THE CAMPAIGN
FINANCE LAWS REGARDING TRANSPARENCY IN SOURCES OF SPENDING,
DIGITAL ADVERTISEMENT CAMPAIGNS, PROTECTIONS AGAINST FOREIGN
INTERFERENCE IN ELECTIONS, AND LIMITING SUPER PAC INFLUENCE;
REESTABLISHING PUBLIC FINANCING FOR JUDICIAL CAMPAIGNS; AND
RESTORING CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS OF CERTAIN OFFENDERS.

Whereas, short-term political incentives are currently set against the long-term public
good; and

Whereas, the needed reforms are generally well known; and

Whereas, the people of North Carolina are demanding free and fair elections and a
true democracy; and

Whereas, restoring the people's trust in our work begins with restoring the people's
fundamental role in our elections; Now, therefore,
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. NONPARTISAN REDISTRICTING PROCESS

SECTION 1.1.(a) Section 3 of Article II of the North Carolina Constitution reads as
rewritten:

"Sec. 3. Senate districts; apportionment of Senators.

The Senators shall be elected from districts. The General Assembly, at the first regular session
convening after the return of every decennial census of population taken by order of Congress,
shall revise the senate districts and the apportionment of Senators among those districts, subject
to the following requirements: Assembly shall establish a nonpartisan process to revise the senate



* D R H 1 0 3 1 6 - L U X F A Y E - 5 3 B *

districts and the apportionment of Senators among those districts pursuant to Section 25 of this Article.

(1) ~~Each Senator shall represent, as nearly as may be, an equal number of inhabitants, the number of inhabitants that each Senator represents being determined for this purpose by dividing the population of the district that he represents by the number of Senators apportioned to that district;~~

(2) ~~Each senate district shall at all times consist of contiguous territory;~~

(3) ~~No county shall be divided in the formation of a senate district;~~

(4) ~~When established, the senate districts and the apportionment of Senators shall remain unaltered until the return of another decennial census of population taken by order of Congress."~~

SECTION 1.1.(b) Section 5 of Article II of the North Carolina Constitution reads as rewritten:

"Sec. 5. Representative districts; apportionment of Representatives.

The Representatives shall be elected from districts. The General Assembly, ~~at the first regular session convening after the return of every decennial census of population taken by order of Congress, shall revise the representative districts and the apportionment of Representatives among those districts, subject to the following requirements:~~ Assembly shall establish a nonpartisan process to revise the representative districts and the apportionment of Representatives among those districts pursuant to Section 25 of this Article.

(1) ~~Each Representative shall represent, as nearly as may be, an equal number of inhabitants, the number of inhabitants that each Representative represents being determined for this purpose by dividing the population of the district that he represents by the number of Representatives apportioned to that district;~~

(2) ~~Each representative district shall at all times consist of contiguous territory;~~

(3) ~~No county shall be divided in the formation of a representative district;~~

(4) ~~When established, the representative districts and the apportionment of Representatives shall remain unaltered until the return of another decennial census of population taken by order of Congress."~~

SECTION 1.1.(c) Article II of the North Carolina Constitution is amended by adding a new section to read:

"Sec. 25. Redistricting.

The General Assembly shall establish by law a nonpartisan process to revise electoral districts for the General Assembly and the House of Representatives of the United States Congress after the return of every decennial census of population taken by order of Congress. The process shall meet at least all of the following requirements:

(1) The General Assembly shall have no role in revising electoral districts for the General Assembly or the House of Representatives of the United States Congress.

(2) Each member of the Senate and House of Representatives of the General Assembly and the House of Representatives of the United States Congress shall represent, as nearly as may be, an equal number of inhabitants.

(3) Each electoral district shall at all times consist of contiguous territory.

(4) To the extent practicable and consistent with federal law, no county shall be divided in the formation of an electoral district for the Senate or House of Representatives of the General Assembly.

(5) When established, the electoral districts for the Senate and House of Representatives of the General Assembly shall remain unaltered until the return of another decennial census of population taken by order of Congress.

(6) Electoral districts adopted pursuant to the process shall have the force and effect of acts of the General Assembly."

SECTION 1.1.(d) Subsection (5) of Section 22 of Article II of the North Carolina Constitution reads as rewritten:

"(5) ~~Other exceptions. Appointments to office. Every bill:~~

- (a) ~~In bill in which the General Assembly makes an appointment or appointments to public office and which contains no other matter;~~
- (b) ~~Revising the senate districts and the apportionment of Senators among those districts and containing no other matter;~~
- (c) ~~Revising the representative districts and the apportionment of Representatives among those districts and containing no other matter; or~~
- (d) ~~Revising the districts for the election of members of the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States and the apportionment of Representatives among those districts and containing no other matter;~~
- matter shall be read three times in each house before it becomes law and shall be signed by the presiding officers of both houses."

SECTION 1.2.(a) The amendments set out in Section 1.1 of this act shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the State at the statewide general election to be held in November 2026, which election shall be conducted under the laws then governing elections in the State. Ballots, voting systems, or both may be used in accordance with Chapter 163 of the General Statutes. The question to be used in the voting systems and ballots shall be:

"[] FOR [] AGAINST

A constitutional amendment providing for a nonpartisan process to be established in law to redistrict the State for the purpose of electing members of the General Assembly and the United States House of Representatives. The General Assembly would establish the nonpartisan process in law and have no other role in the creation of the districts."

SECTION 1.2.(b) If a majority of votes cast on the question are in favor of the amendments set out in Section 1.1 of this act, the State Board of Elections shall certify the amendments to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State shall enroll the amendments so certified among the permanent records of that office. The amendments are effective upon certification.

SECTION 1.3. Except as otherwise provided, this Part is effective when it becomes law.

PART II. REENACT NONPARTISAN JUDICIAL ELECTIONS

SECTION 2.1. Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Subchapter to read:

"SUBCHAPTER XI. ELECTION OF APPELLATE, SUPERIOR, AND DISTRICT COURT JUDGES.

"Article 26.

"Nomination and Election of Appellate, Superior, and District Court Judges.

"§ 163-350. Applicability.

The nomination and election of justices of the Supreme Court, judges of the Court of Appeals, and superior and district court judges of the General Court of Justice shall be as provided by this Article.

"§ 163-351. Nonpartisan primary election method.

(a) General. – Except as provided in G.S. 163-358, there shall be a primary to narrow the field of candidates to two candidates for each position to be filled if, when the filing period closes, there are more than two candidates for a single office or the number of candidates for a group of offices exceeds twice the number of positions to be filled. If only one or two candidates file for a single office, no primary shall be held for that office, and the candidates shall be declared nominated. If the number of candidates for a group of offices does not exceed twice the number of positions to be filled, no primary shall be held for those offices, and the candidates shall be declared nominated.

(b) Determination of Nominees. – In the primary, the two candidates for a single office receiving the highest number of votes, and those candidates for a group of offices receiving the highest number of votes, equal to twice the number of positions to be filled shall be declared nominated. If two or more candidates receiving the highest number of votes each receive the same number of votes, the State Board shall determine their relative ranking by lot and shall declare the nominees accordingly. The canvass of the primary shall be held on the same date as the primary canvass fixed under G.S. 163-182.5. The canvass shall be conducted in accordance with Article 15A of this Chapter.

(c) Determination of Election Winners. – In the election, the names of those candidates declared nominated without a primary and those candidates nominated in the primary shall be placed on the ballot. The candidate for a single office receiving the highest number of votes shall be elected. Those candidates for a group of offices receiving the highest number of votes, equal in number to the number of positions to be filled, shall be elected. If two candidates receiving the highest number of votes each received the same number of votes, the State Board shall determine the winner by lot.

"§ 163-352. Notice of candidacy.

(a) Form of Notice. – Each person offering to be a candidate for election shall do so by filing a notice of candidacy with the State Board in the following form, inserting the words in parentheses when appropriate:

Date: _____

I hereby file notice that I am a candidate for election to the office of _____ in the regular election to be held _____, _____.

Signed: _____

(Name of Candidate)

Witness: _____

The notice of candidacy shall be either signed in the presence of the chairman or secretary of the State Board or signed and acknowledged before an officer authorized to take acknowledgments who shall certify the notice under seal. An acknowledged and certified notice may be mailed to the State Board. In signing a notice of candidacy, the candidate shall use only the candidate's legal name and, in the candidate's discretion, any nickname by which the candidate is commonly known. A candidate may also, in lieu of that candidate's first name and legal middle initial or middle name, if any, sign that candidate's nickname, provided the candidate appends to the notice of candidacy an affidavit that the candidate has been commonly known by that nickname for at least five years prior to the date of making the affidavit. The candidate shall also include with the affidavit the way the candidate's name (as permitted by law) should be listed on the ballot if another candidate with the same last name files a notice of candidacy for that office.

A notice of candidacy signed by an agent or any person other than the candidate himself or herself shall be invalid.

(b) Time for Filing Notice of Candidacy. – Candidates seeking election to the following offices shall file their notice of candidacy with the State Board no earlier than 12:00 noon on the first Monday in December and no later than 12:00 noon on the third Friday in December preceding the election:

Justices of the Supreme Court.

Judges of the Court of Appeals.

Judges of the superior courts.

1 Judges of the district courts.

2 (c) Withdrawal of Notice of Candidacy. – Any person who has filed a notice of candidacy
3 for an office shall have the right to withdraw it at any time prior to the close of business on the
4 third business day prior to the date on which the right to file for that office expires under the
5 terms of subsection (b) of this section.

6 (d) Certificate That Candidate is Registered Voter. – Candidates shall file, along with
7 their notice, a certificate signed by the chairman of the board of elections or the supervisor of
8 elections of the county in which they are registered to vote, stating that the person is registered
9 to vote in that county. In issuing the certificate, the chairman or supervisor shall check the
10 registration records of the county to verify the information. During the period commencing 36
11 hours immediately preceding the filing deadline, the State Board shall accept, on a conditional
12 basis, the notice of candidacy of a candidate who has failed to secure the verification required by
13 this subsection subject to receipt of verification no later than three days following the filing
14 deadline. The State Board shall prescribe the form for the certificate and distribute it to each
15 county board of elections no later than the last Monday in December of each odd-numbered year.

16 (e) Candidacy for More Than One Office Prohibited. – No person may file a notice of
17 candidacy for more than one office or group of offices described in subsection (b) of this section,
18 or for an office or group of offices described in subsection (b) of this section and an office
19 described in G.S. 163-106.2, for any one election. If a person has filed a notice of candidacy with
20 a board of elections under this section or under G.S. 163-106.2 for one office or group of offices,
21 then a notice of candidacy may not later be filed for any other office or group of offices under
22 this section when the election is on the same date unless the notice of candidacy for the first
23 office is withdrawn under subsection (c) of this section.

24 (f) Notice of Candidacy for Certain Offices to Indicate Vacancy. – In any election in
25 which there are two or more vacancies for the office of justice of the Supreme Court, judge of
26 the Court of Appeals, or district court judge to be filled by nominations, each candidate shall, at
27 the time of filing notice of candidacy, file with the State Board a written statement designating
28 the vacancy to which the candidate seeks election. Votes cast for a candidate shall be effective
29 only for election to the vacancy for which the candidate has given notice of candidacy as provided
30 in this subsection.

31 A person seeking election for a specialized district judgeship established under G.S. 7A-147
32 shall, at the time of filing notice of candidacy, file with the State Board a written statement
33 designating the specialized judgeship to which the person seeks nomination.

34 (g) Notice of Candidacy for Superior Court Judge; Residency. – No person may file a
35 notice of candidacy for superior court judge unless that person is at the time of filing the notice
36 of candidacy a resident of the judicial district as it will exist at the time the person would take
37 office if elected. No person may be nominated as a superior court judge under G.S. 163-114
38 unless that person is at the time of nomination a resident of the judicial district as it will exist at
39 the time the person would take office if elected. This subsection implements Section 9(1) of
40 Article IV of the North Carolina Constitution which requires regular Superior Court Judges to
41 reside in the district for which elected.

42 **"§ 163-353. Filing fees required of candidates; refunds.**

43 (a) Fee Schedule. – At the time of filing a notice of candidacy under this Article, each
44 candidate shall pay to the State Board a filing fee for the office the candidate seeks in the amount
45 of one percent (1%) of the annual salary of the office sought.

46 (b) Refund of Fees. – If any person who has filed a notice of candidacy and paid the filing
47 fee prescribed in subsection (a) of this section withdraws his or her notice of candidacy within
48 the period prescribed in G.S. 163-352(c), the candidate shall be entitled to have the fee the
49 candidate paid refunded. The chairman of the State Board shall cause a warrant to be drawn on
50 the State Treasurer for the refund payment.

(c) Refund of Fees Upon Death of Candidate. – If any person who has filed a notice of candidacy and paid the filing fee prescribed in subsection (a) of this section dies prior to the date of the election, the personal representative of the estate shall be entitled to have the fee refunded if application is made to the board of elections to which the fee was paid no later than one year after the date of death and refund shall be made in the same manner as the withdrawal of notice of candidacy.

"§ 163-354. Petition in lieu of payment of filing fee.

(a) General. – Any qualified voter who seeks election under this Article may, in lieu of payment of any filing fee required for the office sought, file a written petition requesting to be a candidate for a specified office with the State Board.

(b) Requirements of Petition; Deadline for Filing. – If the candidate is seeking the office of justice of the Supreme Court, judge of the Court of Appeals, or superior or district court judge, that individual shall file a written petition with the State Board no later than 12:00 noon on Monday preceding the filing deadline before the primary. If the office is justice of the Supreme Court or judge of the Court of Appeals, the petition shall be signed by 8,000 registered voters in the State. If the office is superior or district court judge, the petition shall be signed by five percent (5%) of the registered voters of the election area in which those registered voters will vote for that office. The board of elections shall verify the names on the petition and, if the petition and notice of candidacy are found to be sufficient, the candidate's name shall be printed on the appropriate ballot. Petitions shall be presented to the county board of elections for verification at least 15 days before the petition is due to be filed with the State Board. The State Board may adopt rules to implement this section and to provide standard petition forms.

"§ 163-355. Certification of notices of candidacy.

(a) Names of Candidates Sent to Secretary of State. – Within three days after the time for filing notices of candidacy with the State Board under the provisions of G.S. 163-352(b) has expired, the chairman or secretary of that Board shall certify to the Secretary of State the name and address of each person who has filed with the State Board, indicating in each instance the office sought.

(b) Notification of Local Boards. – No later than 10 days after the time for filing notices of candidacy under the provisions of G.S. 163-352(b) has expired, the chairman of the State Board shall certify to the chairman of the county board of elections in each county in the appropriate district the names of candidates for nomination to the offices of justice of the Supreme Court, judge of the Court of Appeals, and superior and district court judge who have filed the required notice and paid the required filing fee or presented the required petition to the State Board so that their names may be printed on the official judicial ballot for justice of the Supreme Court, judge of the Court of Appeals, and superior and district court judge.

(c) Receipt of Notification by County Board. – Within two days after receipt of each of the letters of certification from the chairman of the State Board required by subsection (b) of this section, each county board of elections chairman shall acknowledge receipt by letter addressed to the chairman of the State Board.

"§ 163-356. Rules when vacancies for superior court judge are to be voted on.

If a vacancy occurs in a judicial district for any offices of superior court judge, and on account of the occurrence of the vacancy there is to be an election for one or more terms in that district to fill the vacancy or vacancies, at that same election in accordance with G.S. 163-9 and Section 19 of Article IV of the North Carolina Constitution, the nomination and election shall be determined by the following special rules in addition to any other provisions of law:

(1) If the vacancy occurs prior to the opening of the filing period under G.S. 163-352(b), nominations shall be made by primary election as provided by this Article without designation as to the vacancy.

(2) If the vacancy occurs beginning on the opening of the filing period under G.S. 163-352(b) and ending on the sixtieth day before the general election,

candidate filing shall be as provided by G.S. 163-358 without designation as to the vacancy.

- (3) The general election ballot shall contain, without designation as to vacancy, spaces for the election to fill the vacancy where nominations were made or candidates filed under subdivision (1) or (2) of this section. Except as provided in G.S. 163-358, the persons receiving the highest numbers of votes equal to the term or terms to be filled shall be elected to the term or terms.

"§ 163-357. Failure of candidates to file; death or other disqualification of a candidate; no withdrawal from candidacy.

(a) Insufficient Number of Candidates. – If, when the filing period expires, candidates have not filed for an office to be filled under this Article, the State Board shall extend the filing period for five days for any such offices.

(b) Death or Disqualification of Candidate Before Primary. – If a candidate for nomination in a primary dies or becomes disqualified before the primary but after the ballots have been printed, the State Board shall determine whether or not there is time to reprint the ballots. If the State Board determines that there is not enough time to reprint the ballots, the deceased or disqualified candidate's name shall remain on the ballots. If that candidate receives enough votes for nomination, such votes shall be disregarded and the candidate receiving the next highest number of votes below the number necessary for nomination shall be declared nominated. If the death or disqualification of the candidate leaves only two candidates for each office to be filled, the nonpartisan primary shall not be held and all candidates shall be declared nominees.

(c) Earlier Non-Primary Vacancies; Reopening Filing. – If there is no primary because only one or two candidates have filed for a single office, or the number of candidates filed for a group of offices does not exceed twice the number of positions to be filled, or if a primary has occurred and eliminated candidates, and thereafter a remaining candidate dies or otherwise becomes disqualified before the election and before the ballots are printed, the State Board shall, upon notification of the death or other disqualification, immediately reopen the filing period for an additional five days during which time additional candidates shall be permitted to file for election. If the ballots have been printed at the time the State Board receives notice of the candidate's death or other disqualification, the State Board shall determine whether there will be sufficient time to reprint them before the election if the filing period is reopened for three days. If the State Board determines that there will be sufficient time to reprint the ballots, it shall reopen the filing period for three days to allow other candidates to file for election and that election shall be conducted as provided in G.S. 163-358(b).

(d) Later Vacancies; Ballots Not Reprinted. – If the ballots have been printed at the time the State Board receives notice of a candidate's death or other disqualification, and if the Board determines that there is not enough time to reprint the ballots before the election if the filing period is reopened for three days, then regardless of the number of candidates remaining for the office or group of offices, the ballots shall not be reprinted and the name of the vacated candidate shall remain on the ballots. If a vacated candidate should poll the highest number of votes in the election for a single office or enough votes to be elected to one of a group of offices, the State Board shall declare the office vacant and it shall be filled in the manner provided by law.

(e) No Withdrawal Permitted of Living, Qualified Candidate After Close of Filing. – After the close of the candidate filing period, a candidate who has filed a notice of candidacy for the office, who has not withdrawn notice before the close of filing as permitted by G.S. 163-352(b), who remains alive, and who has not become disqualified for the office may not withdraw his or her candidacy. That candidate's name shall remain on the ballot, any votes cast for the candidacy shall be counted in the primary or election, and if the candidate wins, the candidate may fail to qualify by refusing to take the oath of office.

(f) Death, Disqualification, or Failure to Qualify After Election. – If a person elected to the office of justice of the Supreme Court, judge of the Court of Appeals, or superior or district court judge dies or becomes disqualified on or after election day and before the person has qualified by taking the oath of office, or fails to qualify by refusing to take the oath of office, the office shall be deemed vacant and shall be filled as provided by law.

"§ 163-358. Elections to fill vacancy in office created after primary filing period opens.

(a) General. – If a vacancy is created in the office of justice of the Supreme Court, judge of the Court of Appeals, or judge of superior court after the filing period for the primary opens but more than 60 days before the general election, and under the Constitution of North Carolina an election is to be held for that position, such that the office shall be filled in the general election as provided in G.S. 163-9, the election to fill the office for the remainder of the term shall be conducted without a primary using the method provided in subsection (b) of this section. If a vacancy is created in the office of justice of the Supreme Court, judge of the Court of Appeals, or judge of superior court before the filing period for the primary opens, and under the Constitution of North Carolina an election is to be held for that position, such that the office shall be filled in the general election as provided in G.S. 163-9, the election to fill the office for the remainder of the term shall be conducted in accordance with G.S. 163-351.

(b) Method for Vacancy Election. – If a vacancy for the office of justice of the Supreme Court, judge of the Court of Appeals, or judge of superior court occurs more than 60 days before the general election and after the opening of the filing period for the primary, then the State Board shall designate a special filing period of one week for candidates for the office. If more than two candidates file and qualify for the office in accordance with G.S. 163-352, then the Board shall conduct the election for the office as follows:

(1) When the vacancy described in this section occurs more than 63 days before the date of the second primary for members of the General Assembly, a special primary shall be held on the same day as the second primary. The two candidates with the most votes in the special primary shall have their names placed on the ballot for the general election held on the same day as the general election for members of the General Assembly.

(2) When the vacancy described in this section occurs less than 64 days before the date of the second primary, a general election for all the candidates shall be held on the same day as the general election for members of the General Assembly and the results shall be determined on a plurality basis as provided by G.S. 163-292.

(c) Applicable Provisions. – Except as provided in this section, the provisions of this Article apply to elections conducted under this section.

"§ 163-359. Voting in primary.

Any person who will become qualified by age or residence to register and vote in the general election for which the primary is held, even though not so qualified by the date of the primary, shall be entitled to register for the primary and general election prior to the primary and then to vote in the primary after being registered. The person may register not earlier than 60 days nor later than the last day for making application to register under G.S. 163-82.6(d) prior to the primary.

"§ 163-360. Date of primary.

The primary shall be held on the same date as established for primary elections under G.S. 163-1(b).

"§ 163-361. Ballots.

(a) General. – In elections there shall be official ballots. The ballots shall be printed to conform to the requirement of G.S. 163-165.6(c) and to show the name of each person who has filed notice of candidacy and the office for which each aspirant is a candidate.

Only those who have filed the required notice of candidacy with the proper board of elections, and who have paid the required filing fee or qualified by petition, shall have their names printed on the official primary ballots. Only those candidates properly nominated shall have their names appear on the official general election ballots.

(b) Ballots to be Furnished by County Board of Elections. – It shall be the duty of the county board of elections to print official ballots for the following offices to be voted for in the primary:

Justice of the Supreme Court.

Judge of the Court of Appeals.

Superior court judge.

District court judge.

In printing ballots, the county board of elections shall be governed by instructions of the State Board with regard to width, color, kind of paper, form, and size of type.

Three days before the election, the chairman of the county board of elections shall distribute official ballots to the chief judge of each precinct in the chairman's county, and the chief judge shall give a receipt for the ballots received. On the day of the primary, it shall be the chief judge's duty to have all the ballots so delivered available for use at the precinct voting place.

"§ 163-362. Counting of ballots.

Counting of ballots in primaries and elections held under this Article shall be under the same rules as for counting of ballots in nonpartisan municipal elections under Article 24 of this Chapter.

"§ 163-363. Other rules.

Except as provided by this Article, the conduct of elections shall be governed by Subchapter VI of this Chapter."

SECTION 2.2. This Part becomes effective with respect to primaries and elections held on or after January 1, 2026.

PART II-A. CONFORMING STATUTORY CHANGES

SECTION 2A.1. G.S. 18C-112(e)(1) reads as rewritten:

"(1) Files a notice of candidacy under G.S. 163-106 through 163-106.6 or G.S. 163-352 or a petition under ~~G.S. 163-107.1~~ G.S. 163-107.1 or G.S. 163-354."

SECTION 2A.2. G.S. 163-1(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) On Tuesday next after the first Monday in March preceding each general election to be held in November for the officers referred to in subsection (a) of this section, there shall be held in all election precincts within the territory for which the officers are to be elected a primary election for the purpose of nominating candidates for each political party in the State for those ~~offices~~ offices and nonpartisan candidates as to the offices elected under the provisions of Article 26 of this Chapter."

SECTION 2A.3. G.S. 163-22.3 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-22.3. State Board of Elections littering notification.

At the time an individual files with the State Board of Elections a notice of candidacy pursuant to G.S. 163-106, 163-112, 163-291, ~~or 163-294.2~~, or 163-352, is certified to the State Board of Elections by a political party executive committee to fill a nomination vacancy pursuant to G.S. 163-114, is certified to the State Board of Elections by a new political party as that party's nominee pursuant to G.S. 163-98, qualifies with the State Board of Elections as an unaffiliated or write-in candidate pursuant to Article 11 of this Chapter, or formally initiates a candidacy with the State Board of Elections pursuant to any statute or local act, the State Board of Elections shall notify the candidate of the provisions concerning campaign signs in G.S. 136-32 and G.S. 14-156, and the rules adopted by the Department of Transportation pursuant to G.S. 136-18."

1 **SECTION 2A.4.** G.S. 163-82.10B reads as rewritten:

2 "**§ 163-82.10B. Confidentiality of date of birth.**

3 Boards of elections shall keep confidential the date of birth of every voter-registration
4 applicant and registered voter, except in the following situations:

- 5 (1) When a voter has filed notice of candidacy for elective office under
6 G.S. 163-106, 163-122, 163-123, ~~or 163-294.2,~~ or 163-352, has been
7 nominated as a candidate under G.S. 163-98 or G.S. 163-114, or has otherwise
8 formally become a candidate for elective office. The exception of this
9 subdivision does not extend to an individual who meets the definition of
10 "candidate" only by beginning a tentative candidacy by receiving funds or
11 making payments or giving consent to someone else to receive funds or
12 transfer something of value for the purpose of exploring a candidacy.

13 "

14 **SECTION 2A.5.** G.S. 163-106.2(a) reads as rewritten:

15 "(a) Candidates seeking party primary nominations for the following offices shall file their
16 notice of candidacy with the State Board no earlier than 12:00 noon on the first Monday in
17 December and no later than 12:00 noon on the third Friday in December preceding the primary:

18 Governor

19 Lieutenant Governor

20 All State executive officers

21 ~~Justices of the Supreme Court~~

22 ~~Judges of the Court of Appeals~~

23 ~~Judges of the superior court~~

24 ~~Judges of the district court~~

25 United States Senators

26 Members of the House of Representatives of the United States

27 ~~District attorneysattorneys."~~

28 **SECTION 2A.6.** G.S. 163-106.3 reads as rewritten:

29 "**§ 163-106.3. Notice of candidacy for certain offices to indicate vacancy.**

30 In any primary in which there are ~~two or more vacancies for associate justices for the Supreme~~
31 ~~Court, two or more vacancies for the Court of Appeals, two or more vacancies for superior or~~
32 ~~district court judge, or two vacancies for United States Senator from North Carolina, each~~
33 candidate shall, at the time of filing notice of candidacy, file with the State Board of Elections a
34 written statement designating the vacancy to which the candidate seeks nomination. The
35 designation shall not be the name or names of any incumbent or other individual but shall be
36 designated as determined by the State Board of Elections. ~~A person seeking election for a~~
37 ~~specialized district judgeship established under G.S. 7A-147 shall, at the time of filing notice of~~
38 ~~candidacy, file with the State Board of Elections a written statement designating the specialized~~
39 ~~judgeship to which the person seeks nomination. Votes cast for a candidate shall be effective~~
40 only for nomination to the vacancy for which the candidate has given notice of candidacy as
41 provided in this section."

42 **SECTION 2A.7.** G.S. 163-106.5 reads as rewritten:

43 "**§ 163-106.5. Certificate of registration to vote in county and party affiliation; cancellation**
44 **of candidacy; residency requirements for judges.candidacy.**

45 (a) Candidates required to file their notice of candidacy with the State Board of Elections
46 under G.S. 163-106.2 shall file along with their notice a certificate signed by the chairman of the
47 board of elections or the director of elections of the county in which they are registered to vote,
48 stating that the person is registered to vote in that county, ~~if the candidacy is for superior court~~
49 ~~judge and the county contains more than one superior court district, stating the superior court~~
50 ~~district of which the person is a resident, stating the party with which the person is affiliated, and~~
51 that the person has not changed ~~his~~ the person's affiliation from another party or from unaffiliated

within three months prior to the filing deadline under G.S. 163-106.2. In issuing such certificate, the chairman or director shall check the registration records of the county to verify such information. During the period commencing 36 hours immediately preceding the filing deadline the State Board of Elections shall accept, on a conditional basis, the notice of candidacy of a candidate who has failed to secure the verification ordered herein subject to receipt of verification no later than three days following the filing deadline. The State Board of Elections shall prescribe the form for such certificate, and distribute it to each county board of elections no later than the last Monday in December of each odd-numbered year.

(b) When any candidate files a notice of candidacy with a board of elections under G.S. 163-106.2 or under G.S. 163-291(2), the board of elections shall, immediately upon receipt of the notice of candidacy, inspect the registration records of the county, and cancel the notice of candidacy of any person who does not meet the constitutional or statutory qualifications for the office, including residency.

The board shall give notice of cancellation to any candidate whose notice of candidacy has been cancelled under this section by mail or by having the notice served on ~~him~~ the candidate by the sheriff, and to any other candidate filing for the same office. A candidate who has been adversely affected by a cancellation or another candidate for the same office affected by a substantiation under this section may request a hearing on the cancellation. If the candidate requests a hearing, the hearing shall be conducted in accordance with Article 11B of this Chapter.

~~(c) No person may file a notice of candidacy for superior court judge, unless that person is, at the time of filing the notice of candidacy, a resident of the judicial district as it will exist at the time the person would take office if elected. No person may be nominated as a superior court judge under G.S. 163-114, unless that person is, at the time of nomination, a resident of the judicial district as it will exist at the time the person would take office if elected. This subsection implements Section 9(1) of Article IV of the North Carolina Constitution, which requires regular superior court judges to reside in the district for which elected."~~

SECTION 2A.8. G.S. 163-107(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Fee Schedule. – At the time of filing a notice of candidacy, each candidate shall pay to the board of elections with which the candidate files under the provisions of G.S. 163-106, 163-106.1, 163-106.2, 163-106.3, 163-106.4, 163-106.5, and 163-106.6, a filing fee for the office sought in the amount specified in the following tabulation:

Office Sought	Amount of Filing Fee
Governor	One percent (1%) of the annual salary of the office sought
Lieutenant Governor	One percent (1%) of the annual salary of the office sought
All State executive offices	One percent (1%) of the annual salary of the office sought
All Justices, Judges, and District Attorneys of the General Court of Justice	One percent (1%) of the annual salary of the office sought
United States Senator	One percent (1%) of the annual salary of the office sought
Members of the United States House of Representatives	One percent (1%) of the annual salary of the office sought
State Senator	One percent (1%) of the annual salary of the office sought
Member of the State House of Representatives	One percent (1%) of the annual salary of the office sought
All county offices not compensated by	One percent (1%) of the annual salary of

fees office sought
All county offices compensated partly One percent (1%) of the first annual
by salary and partly by fees salary to be received (exclusive of fees)

The salary of any office that is the basis for calculating the filing fee is the starting salary for the office, rather than the salary received by the incumbent, if different. If no starting salary can be determined for the office, then the salary used for calculation is the salary of the incumbent, as of January 1 of the election year."

SECTION 2A.9. G.S. 163-107.1 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-107.1. Petition in lieu of payment of filing fee.

(a) Any qualified voter who seeks nomination in the party primary of the political party with which ~~he the qualified voter~~ affiliates may, in lieu of payment of any filing fee required for the office ~~he seeks, sought,~~ file a written petition requesting ~~him~~ to be a candidate for a specified office with the appropriate board of elections, State, county or municipal.

(b) If the candidate is seeking the office of United States Senator, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, ~~or any State executive officer, Justice of the Supreme Court, or Judge of the Court of Appeals, officer,~~ the petition must be signed by 10,000 registered voters who are members of the political party in whose primary the candidate desires to run, except that in the case of a political party as defined by G.S. 163-96(a)(2) which will be making nominations by primary election, the petition must be signed by five percent (5%) of the registered voters of the State who are affiliated with the same political party in whose primary the candidate desires to run, or in the alternative, the petition shall be signed by no less than 8,000 registered voters regardless of the voter's political party affiliation, whichever requirement is greater. The petition must be filed with the State Board of Elections not later than 12:00 noon on Monday preceding the filing deadline before the primary in which he seeks to run. The names on the petition shall be verified by the board of elections of the county where the signer is registered, and the petition must be presented to the county board of elections at least 15 days before the petition is due to be filed with the State Board of Elections. When a proper petition has been filed, the candidate's name shall be printed on the primary ballot.

(c) County, Municipal and District Primaries. – If the candidate is seeking one of the offices set forth in G.S. 163-106.2 but which is not listed in subsection (b) of this section, or a municipal or any other office requiring a partisan primary which is not set forth in G.S. 163-106.2 or G.S. 163-106.3, the candidate shall file a written petition with the appropriate board of elections no later than 12:00 noon on Monday preceding the filing deadline before the primary. The petition shall be signed by five percent (5%) of the registered voters of the election area in which the office will be voted for, who are affiliated with the same political party in whose primary the candidate desires to run, or in the alternative, the petition shall be signed by no less than 200 registered voters regardless of said voter's political party affiliation, whichever requirement is greater. The board of elections shall verify the names on the petition, and if the petition is found to be sufficient, the candidate's name shall be printed on the appropriate primary ballot. Petitions for candidates for member of the U.S. House of Representatives, District Attorney, ~~judge of the superior court, judge of the district court,~~ and members of the State House of Representatives from multi-county districts or members of the State Senate from multi-county districts must be presented to the county board of elections for verification at least 15 days before the petition is due to be filed with the State Board of Elections, and such petition must be filed with the State Board no later than 12:00 noon on Monday preceding the filing deadline. The State Board of Elections may adopt rules to implement this section and to provide standard petition forms.

...."

SECTION 2A.10. G.S. 163-108(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) No later than 10 days after the time for filing notices of candidacy under the provisions of G.S. 163-106.2 has expired, the chairman of the State Board of Elections shall certify to the chairman of the county board of elections in each county in the appropriate district the names of candidates for nomination to the ~~following offices~~ office of district attorney who have filed the required notice and pledge and paid the required filing fee to the State Board of Elections, so that their names may be printed on the official county ~~ballots: Superior court judge, district court judge, and district attorney ballots.~~"

SECTION 2A.11. G.S. 163-111(c)(1) reads as rewritten:

"(1) A candidate who is apparently entitled to demand a second primary, according to the unofficial results, for one of the offices listed below, and desiring to do so, shall file a request for a second primary in writing with the Executive Director of the State Board of Elections no later than 12:00 noon on the ninth day (including Saturdays and Sundays) following the date on which the primary was conducted, and such request shall be subject to the certification of the official results by the State Board of Elections. If the vote certification by the State Board of Elections determines that a candidate who was not originally thought to be eligible to call for a second primary is in fact eligible to call for a second primary, the Executive Director of the State Board of Elections shall immediately notify such candidate and permit the candidate to exercise any options available to the candidate within a 48-hour period following the notification:

Governor,

Lieutenant Governor,

All State executive officers,

~~Justices, Judges, or~~ District Attorneys of the General Court of Justice,

United States Senators,

Members of the United States House of Representatives,

State Senators in multi-county senatorial districts, and

Members of the State House of Representatives in multi-county representative districts."

SECTION 2A.12. G.S. 163-114 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-114. Filling vacancies among party nominees occurring after nomination and before election.

(a) If any person nominated as a candidate of a political party for one of the offices listed below (either in a primary or convention or by virtue of having no opposition in a primary) dies, resigns, or for any reason becomes ineligible or disqualified before the date of the ensuing general election, the vacancy shall be filled by appointment according to the following instructions:

Position

President

Vice President

Vacancy is to be filled by
appointment of national
executive committee of
political party in which
vacancy occurs

Presidential elector or
alternate elector

Any elective State office

United States Senator

Vacancy is to be filled by ap-
pointment of State execu-
tive committee of political
party in which vacancy occurs

A district office, including:

Member of the United

Appropriate district executive
committee of political

1	States House of Repre-	party in which vacancy occurs
2	sentatives	
3	Judge of district court	
4	District Attorney	
5	State Senator in a multi-	
6	county senatorial district	
7	Member of State House of	
8	Representatives in a	
9	multi-county representative district	
10		
11	State Senator in a single-	County executive committee
12	county senatorial district	of political party in which
13	Member of State House of	vacancy occurs, provided, in
14	Representatives in a	the case of the State Senator
15	single-county represen-	or State Representative in a
16	tative district	single-county district where
17	Any elective county office	not all the county is located
18		in that district, then in
19		voting, only those members of
20		the county executive committee
21		who reside within the district
22		shall vote <u>vote</u> .
23	Judge of superior court in a	County executive committee of
24	single county judicial	political party in which vacancy
25	district where the district is	occurs; provided, in the case of a
26	the whole county or part of the	superior court judge in a single-
27	county	county district where not all
28		the county is located in that
29		district, then in voting, only
30		those members of the county
31		executive committee who
32		reside within the district shall
33		vote
34	Judge of superior court in a	Appropriate district executive
35	multicounty judicial	committee of political party in
36	district	which vacancy occurs.

The party executive making a nomination in accordance with the provisions of this section shall certify the name of its nominee to the chairman of the board of elections, State or county, that has jurisdiction over the ballot item under G.S. 163-182.4. If at the time a nomination is made under this section the general election ballots have already been printed, the provisions of G.S. 163-165.3(c) shall apply. If a vacancy occurs in a nomination of a political party and that vacancy arises from a cause other than death and the vacancy in nomination occurs more than 120 days before the general election, the vacancy in nomination may be filled under this section only if the appropriate executive committee certifies the name of the nominee in accordance with this paragraph at least 75 days before the general election.

~~(b) In a county which is partly in a multicounty judicial district, in choosing that county's member or members of the judicial district executive committee for the multicounty district, only the county convention delegates or county executive committee members who reside within the area of the county which is within that multicounty district may vote.~~

...."

1 **SECTION 2A.13.** G.S. 163-122 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

2 "(c1) This section does not apply to elections under Article 26 of this Chapter."

3 **SECTION 2A.14.** G.S. 163-123(h) reads as rewritten:

4 "(h) Certain Elections Excluded. – This section does not apply to the following elections:

5 (1) Municipal elections or special district elections conducted under Subchapter
6 IX of this Chapter.

7 (2) Nonpartisan board of education elections conducted under G.S. 115C-37.

8 (3) Nonpartisan judicial elections conducted under Subchapter XI of this
9 Chapter."

10 **SECTION 2A.15.** G.S. 163-165.5(a)(3) reads as rewritten:

11 "(3) The names of the candidates as they appear on their notice of candidacy filed
12 pursuant to G.S. 163-106, 163-106.1, 163-106.2, 163-106.3, 163-106.4,
13 163-106.5, ~~and 163-106.6, and 163-352,~~ or on petition forms filed in
14 accordance with G.S. 163-122. No title, appendage, or appellation indicating
15 rank, status, or position shall be printed on the official ballot in connection
16 with the candidate's name. Candidates, however, may use the title Mr., Mrs.,
17 Miss, or Ms. Nicknames shall be permitted on an official ballot if used in the
18 notice of candidacy or qualifying petition, but the nickname shall appear
19 according to standards adopted by the State Board of Elections. Those
20 standards shall allow the presentation of legitimate nicknames in ways that do
21 not mislead the voter or unduly advertise the candidacy. In the case of
22 candidates for presidential elector, the official ballot shall not contain the
23 names of the candidates for elector but instead shall contain the nominees for
24 President and Vice President which the candidates for elector represent. The
25 State Board of Elections shall establish a review procedure that local boards
26 of elections shall follow to ensure that candidates' names appear on the official
27 ballot in accordance with this subdivision."

28 **SECTION 2A.16.** This Part becomes effective with respect to primaries and
29 elections held on or after January 1, 2026.

30 31 **PART III. ENHANCE LEGISLATOR TO LOBBYIST REVOLVING DOOR** 32 **RESTRICTIONS**

33 **SECTION 3.1.** G.S. 120C-304 reads as rewritten:

34 "**§ 120C-304. Restrictions.**

35 (a) No legislator or former legislator may register as a lobbyist under this Article:

36 (1) While in office.

37 (2) ~~Before the later of the close of session as set forth in G.S. 120C-100(a)(7)b.1~~
38 ~~in which the legislator served or six months~~ For a period of two years after
39 leaving office.

40 (b) No public servant or former public servant as defined in G.S. 138A-3(70)a. may
41 register as a lobbyist under this Chapter while in office or ~~within six months~~ for a period of two
42 years after leaving office.

43 (c) No public servant or former public servant as defined in G.S. 138A-3(70)c. may
44 register as a lobbyist under this Chapter ~~within six months~~ for a period of two years after
45 separation from employment as a public servant. No other employee of any State agency may
46 register as a lobbyist under this Chapter to lobby the State agency that previously employed the
47 former employee ~~within six months~~ for a period of two years after voluntary separation or
48 separation for cause from that State agency.

49 "

50 **SECTION 3.2.** This Part becomes effective October 1, 2025.

PART IV. ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

SECTION 4.1. G.S. 163-82.3(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Form Developed by State Board of Elections. – The State Board of Elections shall develop an application form for voter ~~registration~~-registration that may be (i) printed out in blank form or (ii) filled in online as set forth in G.S. 163-82.5A. Any person may use the form to apply to do any of the following:

- (1) Register to vote.
- (2) Change party affiliation or unaffiliated status.
- (3) Report a change of address within a county.
- (4) Report a change of name.

The county board of elections for the county where the applicant resides shall accept the form as application for any of those purposes if the form is submitted as set out in ~~G.S. 163-82.3~~this section."

SECTION 4.2. Article 7A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 163-82.5A. Online voter registration.

(a) This section may be cited as the "Online Voter Registration Act."

(b) Require Availability of Internet for Voter Registration. – The State Board of Elections shall ensure that the following services are available to the public at any time on its official public website:

- (1) Online application for voter registration, the content of which shall be equivalent to the form provided by designated voter registration agencies.
- (2) Online assistance to those applying to register to vote.
- (3) Online completion and submission by applicants of the voter registration application, including the signature of the applicant pursuant to subsection (d) of this section.
- (4) Online receipt of completed voter registration applications.

(c) To the extent any State agency described in G.S. 163-82.19 or G.S. 163-82.20 has signatures of clients, those agencies shall cooperate in sharing those signatures with the State Board of Elections.

(d) An application submitted under this section shall be deemed submitted to the election authority on the date it is received.

(e) An applicant for voter registration under this section provides a signature by doing any of the following:

- (1) In the case of an applicant who has a signature on file with a State government agency, authorizing the agency to transmit that signature to election officials.
- (2) Submitting with the application an electronic copy of the applicant's handwritten signature through electronic means in a manner prescribed by the State Board of Elections.

(f) Upon submission of a completed voter registration application under this section, the State Board of Elections official website shall generate an immediate electronic confirmation on the website that the application has been received, with instructions as to how the applicant may check the status of the application thereafter.

(g) The State Board of Elections shall accept an online voter registration application submitted under this section and ensure that the individual is registered to vote in this State if each of the following is satisfied:

- (1) The individual meets the same voter registration eligibility requirements applicable to individuals who register to vote by mail.
- (2) The individual provides a signature in accordance with subsection (e) of this section.

(h) The State Board of Elections shall inform the applicant for voter registration of the disposition of the application by regular mail. Additionally, the State Board shall make available to the applicant the option to receive the disposition notification by email.

(i) No legal distinction shall be made between registration under this section and registration by written application in accordance with the provisions of this Article.

(j) The State Board of Elections shall ensure that any registered voter may at any time update the voter's registration information, including the voter's address, online through the State Board's official public website in accordance with maintenance of the computerized statewide voter registration list.

(k) Except as provided in G.S. 163-82.6A, the State Board shall revise any information on the computerized list to reflect the update made by the voter at any time until the deadlines for registration under G.S. 163-82.6(d) for a primary or general election.

(l) Upon receipt of updated registration information under this section, the State Board of Elections shall send a notice confirming receipt of the updated information by regular mail, and by email, if available."

SECTION 4.3. G.S. 163-82.6(d) reads as rewritten:

"(d) Registration Deadlines for a Primary or Election. – In order to be valid for a primary or election, the ~~form~~ form must comply with one of the following:

- (1) If submitted by mail, must be postmarked at least 25 days before the primary or election, except that any mailed application on which the postmark is missing or unclear is validly submitted if received in the mail not later than 20 days before the primary or ~~election~~ election.
- (2) If submitted in person, by facsimile transmission, ~~or~~ by transmission of a scanned document, or by online voter registration pursuant to G.S. 163-82.5A, must be received by the county board of elections by a time established by that board, but no earlier than 5:00 P.M., on the twenty-fifth day before the primary or ~~election~~ election.
- (3) If submitted through a delegatee who violates the duty set forth in subsection (a) of this section, must be signed by the applicant and given to the delegatee not later than 25 days before the primary or election, except as provided in subsection (f) of this section."

SECTION 4.4. G.S. 163-82.10(a1) reads as rewritten:

"(a1) Personal Identifying Information. – Full or partial social security numbers, dates of birth, the identity of the public agency at which the voter registered under G.S. 163-82.20, any electronic mail address submitted under this Article, Article 20, or Article 21A of this Chapter, photocopies of identification for voting, and drivers license numbers, whether held by the State Board or a county board of elections, or obtained through online voter registration under G.S. 163-82.5A, are confidential and shall not be considered public records and subject to disclosure to the general public under Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. Cumulative data based on those items of information may be publicly disclosed as long as information about any individual cannot be discerned from the disclosed data. Disclosure of information in violation of this subsection shall not give rise to a civil cause of action. This limitation of liability does not apply to the disclosure of information in violation of this subsection as a result of gross negligence, wanton conduct, or intentional wrongdoing that would otherwise be actionable."

SECTION 4.5. In establishing online voter registration in accordance with this Part, the State Board of Elections shall establish appropriate technological security measures to protect against unauthorized access to information. The State Board of Elections shall ensure that online voter registration under this Part is provided in a manner that is accessible to persons with disabilities so as to provide the same opportunity for access and participation as for other voters.

SECTION 4.6. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the State Auditor, pursuant to Section 3A.2 of S.L. 2024-57, for the State Board of Elections (State Board) the sum

of two hundred fifteen thousand dollars (\$215,000) in recurring funds for each year of the 2025-2027 fiscal biennium and the sum of ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to implement online voter registration pursuant to this Part.

SECTION 4.7. Sections 4.1 through 4.5 of this Part become effective December 1, 2025. Section 4.6 of this Part becomes effective July 1, 2025.

PART V. AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

SECTION 5.1. G.S. 163-82.3 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-82.3. Voter registration application ~~forms~~forms; automatic voter registration at certain agencies.

(a) Form Developed by State Board of Elections. – The State Board of Elections shall develop an application form for voter registration. Any person may use the form to apply to do any of the following:

...

(c) Agency ~~Application Form~~Application. – The county board of elections where an applicant resides shall accept as application for any of the purposes set out in subsection (a) of this section ~~a form~~automatic voter registration developed pursuant to G.S. 163-82.19 or G.S. 163-82.20."

SECTION 5.2. G.S. 163-82.6 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-82.6. Acceptance of application forms.

(a) How the Form May Be Submitted. – The county board of elections shall accept any form described in G.S. 163-82.3 if the applicant submits the form by mail, facsimile transmission, transmission of a scanned document, or in ~~person~~person or by automatic voter registration pursuant to G.S. 163-82.19 or G.S. 163-82.20. The applicant may delegate the submission of the form to another person. Any person who communicates to an applicant acceptance of that delegation shall deliver that form so that it is received by the appropriate county board of elections in time to satisfy the registration deadline in subdivision (1) or (2) of subsection (d) of this section for the next election. It shall be a Class 2 misdemeanor for any person to communicate to the applicant acceptance of that delegation and then fail to make a good faith effort to deliver the form so that it is received by the county board of elections in time to satisfy the registration deadline in subdivision (1) or (2) of subsection (d) of this section for the next election. It shall be an affirmative defense to a charge of failing to make a good faith effort to deliver a delegated form by the registration deadline that the delegatee informed the applicant that the form would not likely be delivered in time for the applicant to vote in the next election. It shall be a Class 2 misdemeanor for any person to sell or attempt to sell a completed voter registration form or to condition its delivery upon payment.

...

(d) Registration Deadlines for a Primary or Election. – In order to be valid for a primary or election, the ~~form~~form must comply with one of the following:

- (1) If submitted by mail, must be postmarked at least 25 days before the primary or election, except that any mailed application on which the postmark is missing or unclear is validly submitted if received in the mail not later than 20 days before the primary or ~~election~~election.
- (2) If submitted in person, by facsimile transmission, ~~or~~by transmission of a scanned document, or by automatic voter registration, must be received by the county board of elections by a time established by that board, but no earlier than 5:00 P.M., on the twenty-fifth day before the primary or ~~election~~election.
- (3) If submitted through a delegatee who violates the duty set forth in subsection (a) of this section, must be signed by the applicant and given to the delegatee not later than 25 days before the primary or election, except as provided in subsection (f) of this section.

...."

SECTION 5.3. G.S. 163-82.19 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-82.19. ~~Voter~~ **Automatic voter registration at drivers license offices; coordination on data interface.**

(a) Automatic Voter Registration at Drivers License Offices. – The Beginning January 1, 2026, the Division of Motor Vehicles shall, pursuant to the rules adopted by in consultation with the State Board of Elections, modify its forms so that implement a method by which any eligible person who applies for original issuance, renewal or correction of a drivers license, or special identification card issued under G.S. 20-37.7 may, on a part of the form, complete an application to register shall be automatically registered to vote, or able to update the voter's registration if the voter has changed his or her address or moved from one precinct to another or from one county to another. The person taking the application shall ask if the applicant is a citizen of the United States. If the applicant states that the applicant is not a citizen of the United States, or declines to answer the question, the person taking the application shall inform the applicant that it is a felony for a person who is not a citizen of the United States to apply to register to vote. The application shall state in clear language the penalty for violation of this section. The necessary forms shall be prescribed by the State Board of Elections. The form must ask for the previous voter registration address of the voter, if any. If a previous address is listed, and it is not in the county of residence of the applicant, the appropriate county board of elections shall treat the application as an authorization to cancel the previous registration and also process it as such under the procedures of G.S. 163-82.9. If a previous address is listed and that address is in the county where the voter applies to register, the application shall be processed as if it had been submitted under G.S. 163-82.9. inform the applicant of the following:

- (1) That the applicant shall be registered to vote or have the applicant's voter registration record updated, as applicable, unless the applicant declines.
- (2) The qualifications to vote under G.S. 163-55.
- (3) That the applicant should not register if the applicant does not meet the qualifications described under subdivision (2) of this subsection.
- (4) That any person who willfully and knowingly and with fraudulent intent gives false information on the application is guilty of a Class I felony.
- (5) That if the applicant declines to register to vote, the fact that the applicant has declined to register will remain confidential and be used for voter registration purposes only.
- (6) Information regarding the address confidentiality program under Chapter 15C of the General Statutes, including how to register for the program and how voter registration may impact participation in the program.

(a1) Requirements. – An applicant must affirmatively opt-out of voter registration if the applicant chooses to decline automatic voter registration. If the applicant does not decline voter registration, the person taking the application shall require the applicant to provide all information requested of the applicant under G.S. 163-82.4, including declaring a preference to be affiliated with a political party or a preference to be an unaffiliated voter. If the applicant fails to declare a political party affiliation, the applicant's political affiliation shall be designated as unaffiliated. The applicant shall provide an electronic signature as required under G.S. 163-82.6(c), subject to the penalty of perjury, by which the applicant attests that the information provided by the applicant is true and that the applicant meets all qualifications to become a registered voter.

(a2) When Registration Effective. – Registration shall become effective as provided in G.S. 163-82.7. Applications to register to vote accepted at a drivers license office under this section until the deadline established in G.S. 163-82.6(d)(2) shall be treated as timely made for an election, and no person who completes an application at that drivers license office shall be denied the vote in that election for failure to apply earlier than that deadline.

(a3) ~~All applications shall be forwarded by the Transmittal from Department of Transportation to Board of Elections. – The Department of Transportation shall electronically transmit the applications of applicants who have not declined voter registration to the appropriate board of elections not later than five business days after the date of acceptance, according to rules which shall be promulgated by the State Board of Elections. Board.~~ Those rules shall provide for a paperless, instant, electronic transfer of applications to the appropriate board of elections.

(a4) Confidentiality of Declination to Register. – No information relating to a declination to register to vote in connection with a voter registration application at a Division of Motor Vehicles office may be used for any purpose other than voter registration. The State Board shall ensure that information acquired for purposes of automatic voter registration under this section is kept confidential in accordance with G.S. 163-82.4(c), including compliance with any voter registration requirements under G.S. 163-82.10.

(b) ~~Any Ineligible Applications Prohibited. – If a person who is ineligible to vote becomes registered to vote pursuant to this section, the presumption shall be that the person's registration is deemed officially authorized and shall not be attributed to any fault of the person. However, any person who willfully and knowingly and with fraudulent intent gives false information on the application described under this section is guilty of a Class I felony.~~

...
(d) No Requirement to Determine Eligibility. – Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring the Department of Transportation to determine eligibility for voter registration and voting."

SECTION 5.4. G.S. 163-82.20 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-82.20. Voter registration at other public agencies; automatic voter registration.

(a) Voter Registration Agencies. – Every office in this State which accepts:

...
(b) Duties of Voter Registration Agencies. – A Agencies; Automatic Voter Registration Information. – Beginning January 1, 2027, a voter registration agency described in subsection (a) of this section shall, unless the applicant declines, in writing, to register to vote; in consultation with the State Board, provide, with each application for service or assistance, and with each recertification, renewal, or change of address relating to such service or assistance, an application process for automatic voter registration. The person taking the application shall inform the applicant of the following:

(1) ~~Distribute with each application for service or assistance, and with each recertification, renewal, or change of address relating to such service or assistance; That the applicant shall be registered to vote or have the applicant's voter registration record updated, as applicable, unless the applicant declines.~~

a. ~~The voter registration application form described in G.S. 163-82.3(a) or (b); or~~

b. ~~The voter registration agency's own form, if it is substantially equivalent to the form described in G.S. 163-82.3(a) or (b) and has been approved by the State Board of Elections, provided that the agency's own form may be a detachable part of the agency's paper application or may be a paperless computer process, as long as the applicant is required to sign an attestation as part of the application to register.~~

(2) ~~Provide a form that contains the elements required by section 7(a)(6)(B) of the National Voter Registration Act; and The qualifications to vote under G.S. 163-55.~~

(3) ~~Provide to each applicant who does not decline to register to vote the same degree of assistance with regard to the completion of the registration~~

~~application as is provided by the office with regard to the completion of its own forms. That the applicant should not register if the applicant does not meet the qualifications described under subdivision (2) of this subsection.~~

(4) That any person who willfully and knowingly and with fraudulent intent gives false information on the application is guilty of a Class I felony.

(5) That if the applicant declines to register to vote, the fact that the applicant has declined to register will remain confidential and be used for voter registration purposes only.

(6) Information regarding the address confidentiality program under Chapter 15C of the General Statutes, including how to register for the program and how voter registration may impact participation in the program.

(b1) Requirements. – An applicant must affirmatively opt-out of voter registration if the applicant chooses to decline automatic voter registration. If the applicant does not decline voter registration, the person taking the application shall require the applicant to provide all information requested of the applicant under G.S. 163-82.4, including declaring a preference to be affiliated with a political party or a preference to be an unaffiliated voter. If the applicant fails to declare a political party affiliation, the applicant's political affiliation shall be designated as unaffiliated. The applicant shall provide an electronic signature as required under G.S. 163-82.6(c), subject to the penalty of perjury, by which the applicant attests that the information provided by the applicant is true and that the applicant meets all qualifications to become a registered voter.

(c) Employment Security Law Applicants. – Provided that voter registration agencies designated under subdivision (a)(3) of this section shall only be required to provide the services set out in this subsection to applicants for new claims, reopened claims, and changes of address under Chapter 96 of the General Statutes, the Employment Security Law.

(d) Home Registration for Disabled. – If a voter registration agency provides services to a person with disability at the person's home, the voter registration agency shall provide the services described in subsection (b) of this section at the person's home. However, the agency is not required to provide automatic voter registration at the person's home.

...

(f) Confidentiality of Declination to Register. – No information relating to a declination to register to vote in connection with an application made at a voter registration agency may be used for any purpose other than voter registration. The State Board shall ensure that information acquired for purposes of automatic voter registration under this section is kept confidential in accordance with G.S. 163-82.4(c), including compliance with any voter registration requirements under G.S. 163-82.10.

(g) Transmittal From Agency to Board of Elections. – Any voter registration application completed at a voter registration agency shall be accepted by that agency in lieu of the applicant's mailing the application. Any such application so received shall be transmitted. The agency shall electronically transmit the applications of applicants who did not decline voter registration to the appropriate board of elections not later than five business days after acceptance, according to rules which shall be promulgated by the State Board of Elections.

...

(i) Ineligible Applications Prohibited. – No person shall make application to register to vote under this section if that person is ineligible on account of age, citizenship, lack of residence for the period of time provided by law, or because of conviction of a felony. However, if a person who is ineligible to vote becomes registered to vote pursuant to this section, the presumption shall be that the person's registration is deemed officially authorized and shall not be attributed to any fault of the person.

(j) No Requirement to Determine Eligibility. – Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring agencies to determine eligibility for voter registration and voting."

1 **SECTION 5.5.** G.S. 163-82.20A reads as rewritten:

2 **"§ 163-82.20A. Voter registration upon restoration of citizenship.**

3 The State Board of Elections, the Division of Prisons of the Department of Adult Correction,
4 and the Administrative Office of the Courts shall jointly develop and implement educational
5 programs and procedures for persons to apply to register to vote at the time they are restored to
6 citizenship and all filings required have been completed under Chapter 13 of the General Statutes.
7 Those procedures shall be designed to do both of the following:

8 (1) Inform the person that the restoration of rights removes the person's
9 disqualification from voting, but that in order to vote the person must register
10 to ~~vote~~-vote, including informing the person of automatic voter registration in
11 accordance with G.S. 163-82.19.

12 (2) Provide an opportunity to that person to register to vote.

13 At a minimum, the program shall include a written notice to the person whose citizenship has
14 been restored, informing that person that the person may now register to vote, with a voter
15 registration form enclosed with the notice."

16 **SECTION 5.6.** The State Board of Elections shall establish and implement an
17 education and outreach campaign to inform voters of the automatic voter registration procedures
18 established pursuant to this act.

19 **SECTION 5.7.** Sections 5.1 through 5.3 and Section 5.5 of this Part become effective
20 January 1, 2026. Section 5.4 of this Part becomes effective January 1, 2027. The remainder of
21 this Part is effective when it becomes law.

22
23 **PART VI. OPEN MEETINGS LAW REFORM/LIVE VIDEO AND AUDIO**
24 **STREAMING IN LEGISLATIVE COMPLEX**

25 **SECTION 6.1.** G.S. 143-318.14A reads as rewritten:

26 **"§ 143-318.14A. Legislative commissions, committees, and standing subcommittees.**

27 ...

28 (b) Reasonable public notice of all meetings of commissions, committees, and standing
29 subcommittees of the General Assembly shall be ~~given~~-given to all members of the General
30 Assembly; to all members of the commissions, committees, and standing subcommittees; and to
31 the Legislative Services Office, which shall post the notice on the General Assembly website.
32 For purposes of this subsection, "~~reasonable public notice~~" includes, but is not limited
33 ~~to~~ "adequate public notice" means written or electronic notice that is posted and emailed to those
34 who have requested notice at least 48 hours before the time of the meeting. The notice shall
35 include the time, date, location, and, to the extent known, the agenda of the meeting.

36 (1) ~~Notice given openly at a session of the Senate or of the House; or~~

37 (2) ~~Notice mailed or sent by electronic mail to those who have requested notice,~~
38 ~~and to the Legislative Services Office, which shall post the notice on the~~
39 ~~General Assembly web site.~~

40 (b1) The chair of the commission, committee, or standing subcommittee shall make the
41 agenda for a meeting noticed under subsection (b) of this section readily available for public
42 inspection no less than 24 hours in advance of the time of the meeting. Except for items of an
43 emergency nature, the agenda shall not be altered after the notice has been made available to the
44 public. The commission, committee, or standing subcommittee may modify the agenda to include
45 items of an emergency nature only during the meeting. As used in this subsection, items of an
46 emergency nature are matters that involve unexpected circumstances that require immediate
47 consideration by the commission, committee, or standing subcommittee.

48 (b2) No later than 24 hours in advance of the time of the meeting, the chair of the
49 commission, committee, or standing subcommittee shall make available to the members of the
50 same the text of all bills, proposed committee substitutes, and amendments that will be considered
51 during the scheduled meeting. No commission, committee, or standing subcommittee shall

consider or act on a bill, proposed committee substitute, or amendment that has not been made available to the members in accordance with this subsection.

(b3) G.S. 143-318.12 shall not apply to meetings of commissions, committees, and standing subcommittees of the General Assembly.

...."

SECTION 6.2. The Legislative Services Officer (LSO) shall ensure live audiovisual streaming of all floor proceedings and all committee meetings held in the Legislative Complex. Live audiovisual streaming shall include (i) public participation and comment to the extent allowed by the streaming technology and (ii) access to the recorded live stream on a centralized website within 48 hours after all floor proceedings or committee meetings. The LSO shall also ensure the live audiovisual streaming of these floor proceedings and committee meetings are properly recorded and saved.

SECTION 6.3. This Part is effective when it becomes law.

PART VII. ABSENTEE BALLOTS

SECTION 7.1.(a) G.S. 163-229(b)(3) reads as rewritten:

"(3) A space for the identification of the ~~two persons~~ person witnessing the casting of the absentee ballot in accordance with G.S. 163-231, ~~those persons' signatures, those persons' printed names, and those persons' addresses.~~ that person's signature, printed name, and address."

SECTION 7.1.(b) G.S. 163-231(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Procedure for Voting Absentee Ballots. – In the presence of ~~two persons~~ one person who ~~are~~ is at least 18 years of age, and who are not disqualified by G.S. 163-226.3(a)(4) or G.S. 163-237(c), the voter shall do all of the following:

...

(5) Require ~~those two persons~~ the person in whose presence the voter marked that voter's ballots to sign and print ~~their names~~ the name on the application and certificate as ~~witnesses~~ a witness and to indicate ~~those persons' addresses.~~ the person's address. Failure to list a ZIP code does not invalidate the application and certificate. Failure to include a printed witness name does not invalidate the application and certificate if the identity of an individual can solely be ascertained by the witness's signature.

(6) ~~Do one of the following:~~ Have the witness in whose presence the voter marked that voter's ballots certify that the voter is the person submitting the marked ballots.

a. ~~Have the application notarized. The notary public may be the person in whose presence the voter marked that voter's ballot.~~

b. ~~Have the two persons in whose presence the voter marked that voter's ballots to certify that the voter is the registered voter submitting the marked ballots.~~

~~Alternatively to the prior paragraph of this subsection, any requirement for two witnesses shall be satisfied if witnessed by one notary public, who shall comply with all the other requirements of that paragraph. The notary shall affix a valid notarial seal to the envelope, and include the word "Notary Public" below his or her signature.~~

The ~~persons~~ person in whose presence the ballot is marked shall at all times respect the secrecy of the ballot and the privacy of the absentee voter, unless the voter requests assistance and that person is otherwise authorized by law to give assistance. When thus executed, the sealed container-return envelope, with the ballots enclosed, shall be transmitted in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section to the county board of elections which issued the ballots."

SECTION 7.2. G.S. 163-230.2(c) reads as rewritten:

"(c) Return of Request. – The completed request form for absentee ballots shall be delivered either in person or by mail, email, or fax to the county board of elections only by any of the following:

- (1) The voter.
- (2) The voter's near relative or verifiable legal guardian.
- (3) A member of a multipartisan team trained and authorized by the county board of elections pursuant to G.S. 163-226.3."

SECTION 7.3. This Part is effective when it becomes law and applies to elections held on or after that date.

PART VIII. USE OF CERTAIN CAMPUSES/VOTING PLACES

SECTION 8.1. G.S. 163-129(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) At the voting place in each precinct established under the provisions of G.S. 163-128, the county board of elections shall provide or procure by lease or otherwise a suitable structure or part of a structure in which registration and voting may be conducted. To this end, the county board of elections shall be entitled to demand and use any school or other State, county, or municipal building, or a part thereof, or any other building, or a part thereof, which is supported or maintained, in whole or in part by or through tax ~~revenues provided, however, that revenues,~~ including ensuring the use of voting places on college campuses. The State Board shall also make reasonable efforts to provide means for other college campuses to be used as voting places. However, this section shall not be construed to permit any board of elections to demand and use any tax exempt church property for such purposes without the express consent of the individual church involved, for the purpose of conducting registration and voting for any primary or election, and it may require that the requisitioned premises, or a part thereof, be vacated for these purposes."

PART IX. VOTER LIST MAINTENANCE

SECTION 9.1. G.S. 163-82.14 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-82.14. List maintenance.

...

(b) Death. – In order to remove the names of deceased persons from the list of eligible voters in this State, the following shall occur:

- (1) At a minimum of once per week, the Department of Health and Human Services shall furnish free of charge to the Executive Director, in a format prescribed by the State Board, the names of deceased persons who were residents of the State. Upon receipt of the list from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Executive Director shall distribute to each county board of elections the names on that list of deceased persons who were residents of that county. Upon the receipt of those names, each county board of elections shall remove from its voter registration records any person the list shows to be deceased ~~each week-week~~ after confirming that the complete date of birth of the deceased person and the last four digits of the social security number are identical to the person to be removed from the voter registration records. If the last four digits of the social security number are not available from voter registration records, then the county board of elections shall not remove the voter unless it has matched the complete date of birth and other identification information from the deceased records received from the Department of Health and Human Services or a near relative.
- (2) ~~Upon~~ Subject to the requirements of subdivision (1) of this subsection, upon receipt of a signed statement of a near relative or personal representative of the estate of a deceased voter indicating that the person has died, a county

board of elections shall remove the person identified as deceased from its voter registration records within one week of receipt of the signed statement. The county board does not need to send any notice to the address of the person before removing the person from its voter registration records.

...
(d) Change of Address. – In order to remove the names of individuals who have moved out of the county, the following shall occur:

...
(2) Following each congressional election, the county board of elections shall send to each registered voter who has not voted or confirmed the voter's address by another means a confirmation mailing. The county board of elections shall remove from its voter registration records the names of individuals who fail to respond after no less than 60 days to the confirmation mailing sent by the county board in accordance with this subdivision and who do not vote or appear to vote in an election beginning on the date of the notice and ending on the day after the date of the second general election for the United States House of Representatives that occurs after the date of the notice. A county board of elections shall send a confirmation notice that complies with all of the following:

- a. Is a postage prepaid and preaddressed return card, sent by forwardable mail, on which the registrant may state current address.
- b. Contains or is accompanied by a notice to the effect that if the registrant did not change residence but remained in the county, the registrant should return the card not later than the deadline for registration by mail in G.S. 163-82.6(d)(1).
- c. Contains or is accompanied by information as to how the registrant may continue to be eligible to vote if the registrant has moved outside the county.
- d. If a voter has provided the county board of elections with an email address, is an email that (i) provides the confirmation mailing has been sent, (ii) contains information on how the registrant may confirm the registrant's current address online, and (iii) contains information on how the voter may continue to be eligible to vote if the registrant has moved outside the county. If the voter has not provided an email address to the county board but has provided a phone number, the county board shall contact the voter by phone to provide this information.

...
(d1) Notwithstanding subsection (d) of this section, a county board of elections shall not remove a registrant from its list of registered voters solely based on the county board receiving a return mailing as "undeliverable" without taking steps to confirm the registrant's current address by other means.

...."

PART X. TRUE SOURCE OF SPENDING

SECTION 10.1. G.S. 163-278.12 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(h) Except for political committees that do not receive more than six thousand four hundred dollars (\$6,400), or the amount set by G.S. 163-278.13, from any one person in an election, a filer, when reporting donations of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or more in the aggregate under this subsection, shall disclose the identity of the original source of the funds, the amounts of those donations, and any intermediaries who transferred the funds before they were

contributed to the filer. For purposes of this subsection, "original source" means an individual who contributes wages, investment income, or bequests or a person that contributes money received through ordinary commercial transactions. Any person or entity making a donation of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or more, in the aggregate, in an election to a person or entity required to report donations under this subsection shall inform that person or entity of the identity of the original sources of funds being transferred, the amounts of the persons' original funds being transferred, and the identity of any persons who previously transferred the original funds."

SECTION 10.2. G.S. 163-278.12C is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(e) Except for political committees that do not receive more than six thousand four hundred dollars (\$6,400), or the amount set by G.S. 163-278.13, from any one person in an election, a filer, when reporting donations of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or more in the aggregate under this subsection, shall disclose the identity of the original source of the funds, the amounts of those donations, and any intermediaries who transferred the funds before they were contributed to the filer. "Original source" has the same meaning as in G.S. 163-278.12(h). Any person or entity making a donation of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or more, in the aggregate, in an election to a person or entity required to report donations under this subsection shall inform that person or entity of the identity of the original sources of funds being transferred, the amounts of the persons' original funds being transferred, and the identity of any persons who previously transferred the original funds."

SECTION 10.3. G.S. 163-278.39(a) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(5) In an advertisement made by a sponsor other than a candidate, political party organization, an individual solely spending the individual's own personal funds received through wages, investment income, or bequests or a person solely spending money received through ordinary commercial transactions, the advertisement bears the legend or includes the statement: "[Names of top three donors] are the top donors who helped pay for this message." In a television advertisement or digital communication, this disclosure shall be made by visual legend. In advertisements made by a sponsor that reports original sources under G.S. 163-278.12 or G.S. 163-278.12C, the top three donors shall be the three original sources who have donated the highest aggregate amounts to the sponsor in the election cycle."

PART XI. TRANSPARENCY FOR DIGITAL CAMPAIGN ADS

SECTION 11.1. G.S. 163-278.6 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.6. Definitions.

When used in this Article:

...

(28a) The term "digital communication" means any communication, for a fee, placed or promoted on a public-facing website, web application, or digital application, including a social network, advertising network, or search engine.

...

(41) The term "electioneering communication" means any broadcast, cable, or satellite communication, or mass mailing, or telephone bank-bank, or digital communication that has all the following characteristics:

- a. Refers to a clearly identified candidate for elected office.
- b. In the case of the general election in November of the even-numbered year is aired or transmitted within 60 days of the election for that office.
- c. May be received by either:

1. 50,000 or more individuals in the State in an election for statewide office or 7,500 or more individuals in any other election if in the form of broadcast, cable, or satellite communication.
2. 20,000 or more households, cumulative per election, in a statewide election or 2,500 households, cumulative per election, in any other election if in the form of mass mailing or telephone bank.

...."

SECTION 11.2. G.S. 163-278.38Z(1) reads as rewritten:

"(1) "Advertisement" means any message appearing in the print media, on ~~television, or on radio~~ television or radio, or through digital communication that constitutes a contribution or expenditure under this Article."

SECTION 11.3. G.S. 163-278.39 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.39. Basic disclosure requirements for all political advertisements.

(a) Basic Requirements. – It shall be unlawful for any sponsor to sponsor an advertisement in the print ~~media or media~~, on radio or ~~television~~ television, or through digital communication that constitutes an expenditure, independent expenditure, electioneering communication, or contribution required to be disclosed under this Article unless all the following conditions are met:

- (1) It bears the legend or includes the statement: "Paid for by ____ [Name of candidate, candidate campaign committee, political party organization, political action committee, referendum committee, individual, or other sponsor]." In television or digital communication advertisements, this disclosure shall be made by visual legend.

...

If an advertisement described in this section is jointly sponsored, the disclosure statement shall name all the sponsors.

(b) Size Requirements. – The following shall apply to the various forms of advertisement:

- (1) In a print media advertisement covered by subsection (a) of this section, the height of all disclosure statements required by that subsection shall constitute at least five percent (5%) of the height of the printed space of the advertisement, provided that the type shall in no event be less than 12 points in size. In an advertisement in a newspaper or a newspaper insert, the total height of the disclosure statement need not constitute five percent of the printed space of the advertisement if the type of the disclosure statement is at least 28 points in size. If a single advertisement consists of multiple pages, folds, or faces, the disclosure requirement of this section applies only to one page, fold, or face.
- (2) In a television advertisement covered by subsection (a) of this section, the visual disclosure legend shall constitute four percent (4%) of vertical picture height in size, and where the television advertisement that appears is paid for by a candidate or candidate campaign committee, the visual disclosure legend shall appear simultaneously with an easily identifiable photograph of the candidate for at least two seconds.
- (3) In a radio advertisement covered by subsection (a) of this section, the disclosure statement shall last at least two seconds, provided the statement is spoken so that its contents may be easily understood.
- (4) In a digital communication advertisement covered by subsection (a) of this section, the disclosure statement shall appear (i) in letters at least as large as the smallest text in the digital communication or (ii) in a heading or similar

section of text displayed above or within the digital communication that is visually distinct from the text of the digital communication and shall have a reasonable degree of color contrast between the background and the disclosure statement. If the digital communication is disseminated through a medium in which the provision of the disclosure statement is not possible, the digital communication shall, in a clear and conspicuous manner, include the following:

- a. The name of the person who paid for the digital communication.
- b. A means for the recipient of the digital communication to obtain the remainder of the information required by this section with minimal effort and without receiving or viewing any additional material other than the disclosure statement.

(c) Misrepresentation of Authorization. – Notwithstanding G.S. 163-278.27(a), any candidate, candidate campaign committee, political party organization, political action committee, referendum committee, individual, or other sponsor making an advertisement in the print ~~media or media~~, on radio or ~~television-television~~, or through digital communication bearing any legend required by subsection (a) of this section that misrepresents the sponsorship or authorization of the advertisement is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor."

SECTION 11.4. G.S. 163-278.39C reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.39C. Scope of disclosure requirements.

The disclosure requirements of this Part apply to any sponsor of an advertisement in the print ~~media or media~~, on radio or ~~television-television~~, or through digital communication the cost or value of which constitutes an expenditure or contribution required to be disclosed under this Article, except that the disclosure requirements of this Part:

- (1) Do not apply to an individual who makes uncoordinated independent expenditures aggregating less than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) in a political campaign; and
- (2) Do not apply to an individual who incurs expenses with respect to a referendum.

The disclosure requirements of this Part do not apply to any advertisement the expenditure for which is required to be disclosed by G.S. 163-278.12A alone and by no other law."

SECTION 11.5. Part 1A of Article 22A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 163-278.39D. State Board of Elections to maintain records of digital communications for political advertising.

Any person using digital communication, as defined under G.S. 163-278.6(28a), that is covered by G.S. 163-278.39(a) shall submit that digital communication to the State Board of Elections along with the disclosure information required under G.S. 163-278.39. The State Board of Elections shall maintain the information submitted pursuant to this section on the State Board of Elections website and the information shall be deemed public records and available for inspection on the website. The State Board shall display the following information on its website as related to the digital communication:

- (1) The name of the person.
- (2) The city and state where the entity is located.
- (3) The amount spent by the person for each candidate.
- (4) A copy of the political advertisement.
- (5) The dates or date range on which the political advertisement runs."

SECTION 11.6. This Part becomes effective September 1, 2025, and applies to elections conducted on or after that date.

PART XII. PROTECTION AGAINST FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

1 **SECTION 12.1.** G.S. 163-278.39 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:
2 "(a1) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary and in accordance with any
3 federal law, a foreign national expending funds for political advertising that addresses a specific
4 issue to influence State or local government policy, a State or local government officer, or an
5 election shall include a statement in the advertisement that identifies the foreign national and a
6 statement disclosing that the advertising is sponsored by the foreign national. The phrase "foreign
7 national" shall have the same meaning as defined in 52 U.S.C. § 30121(b)."

8
9 **PART XIII. LIMITATIONS/SUPER PACS INFLUENCE**

10 **SECTION 13.1.** Part 1 of Article 22A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is
11 amended by adding a new section to read:

12 **"§ 163-278.12B. Limitations on super political action committees' influence.**

13 (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, any political committee
14 that makes only independent expenditures shall notify the State Board of Elections, in writing,
15 of any of the following:

16 (1) Any contribution in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) received by the
17 committee before an election but after the period covered by the last report
18 due before that election. This notification shall be made within 48 hours after
19 the receipt of the contribution and shall include the name of the committee,
20 the contributor, and the date of receipt and amount of the contribution.

21 (2) Any contribution or donation in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000) made
22 by the committee before an election but after the period covered by the last
23 report due before that election. This notification shall be made within 48 hours
24 after the contribution or donation is made and shall include the name of the
25 committee and the recipient and the date and amount of the contribution or
26 donation.

27 (b) Any person who receives, directly or indirectly, a contribution or donation subject to
28 subsection (a) of this section and who transfers more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) of the
29 funds to another person shall disclose to that person, in writing, at the time the transfer is made
30 each of the following:

31 (1) The identification of the political committee who made the contribution or
32 donation and the date and amount of the contribution or donation.

33 (2) The identification of any other person subject to this section, as either a prior
34 transferor or transferee of the funds from the political committee, and the date
35 and amount of the contribution or donation.

36 (c) For purposes of this section, a contribution or donation includes a pledge, promise,
37 understanding, or agreement to make a future contribution or donation."

38
39 **PART XIV. REESTABLISH NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FUND**

40 **SECTION 14.1.** G.S. 163-278.69 is recodified as G.S. 163-278.129.

41 **SECTION 14.2.** Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by adding the
42 following new Article to read:

43 "Article 22I.

44 "The North Carolina Public Campaign Fund.

45 **"§ 163-278.120. Purpose of the North Carolina Public Campaign Fund.**

46 The purpose of this Article is to ensure the fairness of democratic elections in North Carolina
47 and to protect the constitutional rights of voters and candidates from the detrimental effects of
48 increasingly large amounts of money being raised and spent to influence the outcome of
49 elections, those effects being especially problematic in elections of the judiciary, since
50 impartiality is uniquely important to the integrity and credibility of the courts. Accordingly, this
51 Article reestablishes the North Carolina Public Campaign Fund as an alternative source of

campaign financing for candidates who demonstrate public support and voluntarily accept strict fundraising and spending limits. This Article is available to candidates for justice of the Supreme Court and judge of the Court of Appeals in elections to be held in 2026 and thereafter.

"§ 163-278.121. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) Board. – The State Board of Elections.
- (2) Candidate. – An individual who becomes a candidate as described in G.S. 163-278.6. The term includes a political committee authorized by the candidate for that candidate's election.
- (3) Certified candidate. – A candidate running for office who chooses to receive campaign funds from the Fund and who is certified under G.S. 163-278.123(c).
- (4) Contested primary and contested general election. – An election in which there are more candidates than the number to be elected. A distribution from the Fund pursuant to this Article is not a "contribution" and is not subject to the limitations of G.S. 163-278.13 or the prohibitions of G.S. 163-278.15 or G.S. 163-278.19.
- (5) Contribution. – Defined in G.S. 163-278.6. A distribution from the Fund pursuant to this Article is not a "contribution" and is not subject to the limitations of G.S. 163-278.13 or the prohibitions of G.S. 163-278.15 or G.S. 163-278.19.
- (6) Electioneering communication. – As defined in G.S. 163-278.6, except that it is made during the period beginning 30 days before absentee ballots become available for a primary and ending on primary election day and during the period 60 days before absentee ballots become available for a general election and ending on general election day.
- (7) Expenditure. – Defined in G.S. 163-278.6.
- (8) Fund. – The North Carolina Public Campaign Fund established in G.S. 163-278.122.
- (9) Independent expenditure. – Defined in G.S. 163-278.6.
- (10) Maximum qualifying contributions. – An amount of qualifying contributions equal to 60 times the filing fee for candidacy for the office.
- (11) Minimum qualifying contributions. – An amount of qualifying contributions equal to 30 times the filing fee for candidacy for the office.
- (12) Nonparticipating candidate. – A candidate running for office who is not seeking to be certified under G.S. 163-278.123(c).
- (13) Office. – A position on the North Carolina Court of Appeals or North Carolina Supreme Court.
- (14) Participating candidate. – A candidate for office who has filed a declaration of intent to participate under G.S. 163-278.123.
- (15) Political committee. – Defined in G.S. 163-278.6.
- (16) Qualifying contribution. – A contribution of not less than ten dollars (\$10.00) and not more than five hundred dollars (\$500.00) in the form prescribed for noncash monetary contributions in G.S. 163-278.14(b) to the candidate or the candidate's committee that meets both of the following conditions:
 - a. Made by an individual who is a registered voter in this State at the time of the submittal of the report specified in G.S. 163-278.123(c).
 - b. Made during the qualifying period and obtained with the approval of the candidate or the candidate's committee.
- (17) Qualifying period. – The period beginning September 1 in the year before the election and ending on the day of the primary of the election year.

(18) Referendum committee. – Defined in G.S. 163-278.6.

(19) Trigger for matching funds. – The dollar amount at which matching funds are released for certified candidates. In the case of a primary, the trigger equals the maximum qualifying contributions for participating candidates. In the case of a contested general election, the trigger equals the base level of funding available under G.S. 163-278.125(b)(4).

"§ 163-278.122. North Carolina Public Campaign Fund established; sources of funding.

(a) Establishment of Fund. – The North Carolina Public Campaign Fund is established to finance the election campaigns of certified candidates for office and to pay administrative and enforcement costs of the Board related to this Article. The Fund is a special, dedicated, nonlapsing, nonreverting fund. All expenses of administering this Article, including production and distribution of the Voter Guide required by G.S. 163-278.129 and personnel and other costs incurred by the Board, including public education about the Fund, shall be paid from the Fund and not from the General Fund. Any interest generated by the Fund is credited to the Fund. The Board shall administer the Fund.

(b) Sources of Funding. – Money received from all of the following sources shall be deposited in the Fund:

(1) Designations made to the Fund by individual taxpayers pursuant to G.S. 105-159.2.

(2) Fund revenues distributed for an election that remain unspent or uncommitted at the time the recipient is no longer a certified candidate in the election.

(3) Money ordered returned to the Fund in accordance with G.S. 163-278.128.

(4) Voluntary donations made directly to the Fund. Corporations, other business entities, labor unions, and professional associations may make donations to the Fund.

(5) Money collected from the fifty dollar (\$50.00) surcharge on attorney membership fees in G.S. 84-34.

(c) Determination of Fund Amount. – By October 1, 2026, and every two years thereafter, the State Board shall prepare and provide to the Joint Legislative Elections Oversight Committee a report documenting, evaluating, and making recommendations relating to the administration, implementation, and enforcement of this Article. In its report, the Board shall set out the funds received to date and the expected needs of the Fund for the next election.

"§ 163-278.123. Requirements for participation; certification of candidates.

(a) Declaration of Intent to Participate. – Any individual choosing to receive campaign funds from the Fund shall first file with the Board a declaration of intent to participate under this Article as a candidate for a stated office. The declaration of intent shall be filed before or during the qualifying period and before collecting any qualifying contributions. In the declaration, the candidate shall swear or affirm that only one political committee, identified with its treasurer, shall handle all contributions, expenditures, and obligations for the participating candidate and that the candidate will comply with the contribution and expenditure limits set forth in subsection (d) of this section and all other requirements set forth in this Article or adopted by the Board. Failure to comply is a violation of this Article.

(b) Demonstration of Support of Candidacy. – Participating candidates who seek certification to receive campaign funds from the Fund shall first, during the qualifying period, obtain qualifying contributions from at least 350 registered voters in an aggregate sum that at least equals the amount of minimum qualifying contributions described in G.S. 163-278.121(11) but that does not exceed the amount of maximum qualifying contributions described in G.S. 163-278.121(10).

No payment, gift, anything of value, or the opportunity to win anything of value shall be given in exchange for a qualifying contribution.

(c) Certification of Candidates. – Upon receipt of a submittal of the record of demonstrated support by a participating candidate, the Board shall determine whether or not the candidate has complied with all of the following requirements:

- (1) Signed and filed a declaration of intent to participate in this Article.
- (2) Submitted a report itemizing the appropriate number of qualifying contributions received from registered voters, which the Board shall verify through a random sample or other means it adopts. The report shall include the county of residence of each registered voter listed.
- (3) Filed a valid notice of candidacy pursuant to Article 26 of this Chapter.
- (4) Otherwise met the requirements for participation in this Article.

The Board shall certify candidates complying with the requirements of this section as soon as possible and no later than five business days after receipt of a satisfactory record of demonstrated support.

(d) Restrictions on Contributions and Expenditures for Participating and Certified Candidates. – The following restrictions shall apply to contributions and expenditures with respect to participating and certified candidates:

- (1) Beginning January 1 of the year before the election and before the filing of a declaration of intent, a candidate for office may accept in contributions up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) from sources and in amounts permitted by Article 22A of this Chapter and may expend up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for any campaign purpose. A candidate who exceeds either of these limits shall be ineligible to file a declaration of intent or receive funds from the Fund.
- (2) From the filing of a declaration of intent through the end of the qualifying period, a candidate may accept only qualifying contributions, contributions under ten dollars (\$10.00) from North Carolina voters, and personal and family contributions permitted under subdivision (4) of this subsection. The total contributions the candidate may accept during this period shall not exceed the maximum qualifying contributions for that candidate. In addition to these contributions, the candidate may only expend during this period the remaining money raised pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection and possible matching funds received pursuant to G.S. 163-278.127. Except for personal and family contributions permitted under subdivision (4) of this subsection, multiple contributions from the same contributor to the same candidate shall not exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00).
- (3) After the qualifying period and through the date of the general election, the candidate shall expend only the funds the candidate receives from the Fund pursuant to G.S. 163-278.125(b)(4) plus any funds remaining from the qualifying period and possible matching funds.
- (4) During the qualifying period, the candidate may contribute up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) of that candidate's own money to the campaign. Debt incurred by the candidate for a campaign expenditure shall count toward that limit. The candidate may accept in contributions one thousand dollars (\$1,000) from each member of that candidate's family consisting of spouse, parent, child, brother, and sister. Up to five hundred dollars (\$500.00) of a contribution from the candidate's family member may be treated as a qualifying contribution if it meets the requirements of G.S. 163-278.121(16)a. and b.
- (5) A candidate and the candidate's committee shall limit the use of all revenues permitted by this subsection to expenditures for campaign-related purposes only. The Board shall publish guidelines outlining permissible campaign-related expenditures. In establishing those guidelines, the Board

shall differentiate expenditures that reasonably further a candidate's campaign from expenditures for personal use that would be incurred in the absence of the candidacy. In establishing the guidelines, the Board shall review relevant provisions of the Federal Election Campaign Act, and rules adopted pursuant to it, and similar provisions in other states.

(6) Any contribution received by a participating or certified candidate that falls outside that permitted by this subsection shall be returned to the donor as soon as practicable. Contributions intentionally made, solicited, or accepted in violation of this Article are subject to civil penalties as specified in G.S. 163-278.128. The funds involved shall be forfeited to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund.

(7) A candidate shall return to the Fund any amount distributed for an election that is unspent and uncommitted at the date of the election, or at the time the individual ceases to be a certified candidate, whichever occurs first. For accounting purposes, all qualifying, personal, and family contributions shall be considered spent before revenue from the Fund is spent or committed.

(e) Revocation. – A candidate may revoke, in writing to the Board, a decision to participate in the Fund at any time before the deadline set by the Board for the candidate's submission of information for the Voter Guide described in G.S. 163-278.129. After a timely revocation, that candidate may accept and expend outside the limits of this Article without violating this Article. Within 10 days after revocation, a candidate shall return to the State Board all money received from the Fund.

"§ 163-278.124. Special participation provisions for candidates in vacancy elections.

(a) Participation Provisions Modified. – Candidates involved in elections described in G.S. 163-358 may participate in the Fund subject to the provisions of G.S. 163-278.123 as modified by this section. The Board shall adapt other provisions of this Article, including G.S. 163-278.127, to those elections.

(b) Qualifying. – The Board shall designate a special qualifying period of no less than four weeks for these candidates, beginning at the close of the notice-of-candidacy filing period. To receive certification, a participating candidate shall raise at least 225 qualifying contributions, totaling at least 20 times the amount of the filing fee for the office, for a four-week qualifying period. If the Board sets a longer qualifying period, then for each additional week that the qualifying period extends beyond four weeks, the minimum number of qualifying contributions required for certification shall increase by 25 and the minimum amount of the qualifying contributions shall increase by two times the filing fee. The minimum qualifying contributions shall not exceed the limit set by G.S. 163-278.123(b).

(c) Allocations. – Certified candidates shall receive one percent (1%) of the funding to which they would be eligible under G.S. 163-278.125 times the number of calendar days between the end of the special qualifying period and the day of the general election. That amount shall not exceed one hundred percent (100%) of the funding to which they would be eligible under G.S. 163-278.125.

"§ 163-278.125. Distribution from the Fund.

(a) Timing of Fund Distribution. – The Board shall distribute to a certified candidate revenue from the Fund in an amount determined under subdivision (b)(4) of this section within five business days after the certified candidate's name is approved to appear on the ballot in a contested general election but no earlier than five business days after the primary.

(b) Amount of Fund Distribution. – By August 1, 2026, and no less frequently than every two years thereafter, the Board shall determine the amount of funds, rounded to the nearest one hundred dollars (\$100.00), to be distributed to certified candidates as follows:

(1) Uncontested primaries. – No funds shall be distributed.

- (2) Contested primaries. – No funds shall be distributed except as provided in G.S. 163-278.127.
- (3) Uncontested general elections. – No funds shall be distributed.
- (4) Contested general elections. – Funds shall be distributed to a certified candidate for a position on the Court of Appeals in an amount equal to 125 times the candidate's filing fee as set forth in G.S. 163-353. Funds shall be distributed to a certified candidate for a position on the Supreme Court in an amount equal to 175 times the candidate's filing fee as set forth in G.S. 163-353.

(c) Method of Fund Distribution. – The Board, in consultation with the State Treasurer and the State Controller, shall develop a rapid, reliable method of conveying funds to certified candidates. In all cases, the Board shall distribute funds to certified candidates in a manner that is expeditious, ensures accountability, and safeguards the integrity of the Fund. If the money in the Fund is insufficient to fully fund all certified candidates, then the available money shall be distributed proportionally, according to each candidate's eligible funding, and the candidate may raise additional money in the same manner as a noncertified candidate for the same office up to the unfunded amount of the candidate's eligible funding.

"§ 163-278.126. Reporting requirements.

(a) Reporting by Noncertified Candidates and Other Entities. – Any noncertified candidate with a certified opponent shall report total contributions received to the Board by facsimile machine or electronically within 24 hours after the total amount of contributions received exceeds eighty percent (80%) of the trigger for matching funds as defined in G.S. 163-278.121(19). Any entity making independent expenditures in support of or opposition to a certified candidate or in support of a candidate opposing a certified candidate, or paying for electioneering communications, referring to one of those candidates, shall report the total expenditures or payments made to the Board by facsimile machine or electronically within 24 hours after the total amount of expenditures or payments made for the purpose of making the independent expenditures or electioneering communications exceed five thousand dollars (\$5,000). After the initial 24-hour filing, the noncertified candidate or other reporting entity shall comply with an expedited reporting schedule. The schedule and forms for reports required by this subsection shall be supplied by the Board.

(b) Reporting by Participating and Certified Candidates. – Notwithstanding other provisions of law, participating and certified candidates shall report any money received, including all previously unreported qualifying contributions, all campaign expenditures, obligations, and related activities to the Board according to procedures developed by the Board. A certified candidate who ceases to be certified or ceases to be a candidate or who loses an election shall file a final report with the Board and return any unspent revenues received from the Fund. In developing these procedures, the Board shall utilize existing campaign reporting procedures whenever practical.

(c) Timely Access to Reports. – The Board shall ensure prompt public access to the reports received in accordance with this Article. The Board may utilize electronic means of reporting and storing information.

"§ 163-278.127. Matching funds.

(a) When Matching Funds Become Available. – When any report or group of reports shows that "funds in opposition to a certified candidate or in support of an opponent to that candidate" as described in this section exceed the trigger for matching funds as defined in G.S. 163-278.121(19), the Board shall issue immediately to that certified candidate an additional amount equal to the reported excess within the limits set forth in this section. "Funds in opposition to a certified candidate or in support of an opponent to that candidate" shall be equal to the sum of subdivisions (1) and (2) of this subsection as follows:

- (1) The greater of the following:

a. Campaign expenditures or obligations made, or funds raised or borrowed, whichever is greater, reported by any one nonparticipating candidate who is an opponent of a certified candidate. Where a certified candidate has more than one nonparticipating candidate as an opponent, the measure shall be taken from the nonparticipating candidate showing the highest relevant dollar amount.

b. The funds distributed in accordance with G.S. 163-278.125(b) to a certified opponent of the certified candidate.

(2) The aggregate total of all expenditures and payments reported in accordance with G.S. 163-278.126(a) of entities making independent expenditures or electioneering communications in opposition to the certified candidate or in support of any opponent of that certified candidate.

(b) Limit on Matching Funds Before Date of Primary. – Total matching funds to a certified candidate before the date of the primary shall be limited to an amount equal to two times the maximum qualifying contributions for the office sought. Matching funds are available to a certified candidate with an opponent in the primary or to a certified candidate who is clearly referred to in expenditures reportable under G.S. 163-278.125 made in opposition to that candidate.

(c) Limit on Matching Funds in Contested General Election. – Total matching funds to a certified candidate in a contested general election shall be limited to an amount equal to two times the amount described in G.S. 163-278.125(b)(4).

(d) Expedited Distribution of Matching Funds. – When a candidate becomes entitled to any amount of matching funds under subsection (a) of this section, the Board shall authorize the issuance of that amount to the candidate as soon as practicable. The Department of Administration shall transfer that amount to the candidate as soon as practicable and in no event later than 12 hours after receiving notice from the Board that the candidate has become entitled to it. The Department of Administration shall develop a method of rapidly transferring funds to a candidate or otherwise fulfilling the requirements of this subsection in conjunction with the Board. The candidate shall return to the Board as soon as practicable any amount of the matching funds that the candidate has not spent at the date of the election or at the time the individual ceases to be a certified candidate, whichever occurs first.

(e) Determinations by Board. – In the case of electioneering communications, the Board shall determine which candidate, if any, is entitled to receive matching funds as a result of the communication. The Board shall issue matching funds based on the communication only if it ascertains that the communication is susceptible of no reasonable interpretation other than as an appeal to vote for or against a specific candidate. In making its determination, the Board shall not consider evidence external to the communication itself of the intent of the sponsor or the effect of the communication. The Board shall notify each candidate it determines is entitled to receive matching funds based on those communications, the sponsor of those communications, and any candidate who is an opponent of the candidate it determines is entitled to the matching funds. The Board shall give the sponsor of the communication and any opposing candidate an adequate opportunity to rebut the determination of the Board. In considering the rebuttal, all candidates in the race and the sponsor shall be given adequate and equal opportunity to be heard. The Board shall adopt procedures for implementing this subsection, balancing in those procedures adequacy of opportunity to rebut and adequacy and equality of opportunity to be heard on the rebuttal with the need to expedite the decision on awarding matching funds. The Board shall distribute the matching funds, if any, at the conclusion of its process.

(f) Proportional Measuring of Multicandidate Communications. – In calculating the amount of matching funds a certified candidate is eligible to receive under this section, the Board shall include the proportion of expenditures, obligations, or payments for multicandidate communications that pertain to the candidate.

(g) No Matching Funds for Certain Communications Involving All Candidates. – No matching funds are available under this section as a result of an expenditure that supports all candidates for the same office or opposes all candidates for the same office. No matching funds are available under this section as a result of an electioneering communication that the Board ascertains is susceptible of no reasonable interpretation other than as an appeal to vote for all candidates for the same office or to vote against all candidates for the same office.

"§ 163-278.128. Civil penalty.

In addition to any other penalties that may be applicable, any individual, political committee, or other entity that violates any provision of this Article is subject to a civil penalty of up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) per violation or three times the amount of any financial transactions involved in the violation, whichever is greater. In addition to any fine, for good cause shown, a candidate found in violation of this Article may be required to return to the Fund all amounts distributed to the candidate from the Fund. If the Board makes a determination that a violation of this Article has occurred, the Board shall calculate and assess the amount of the civil penalty and shall notify the entity that is assessed the civil penalty of the amount that has been assessed. The Board shall then proceed in the manner prescribed in G.S. 163-278.34. In determining whether or not a candidate is in violation of this Article, the Board may consider as a mitigating factor any circumstances out of the candidate's control."

SECTION 14.3. G.S. 84-34 reads as rewritten:

"§ 84-34. Membership fees and list of members.

(a) Every active member of the North Carolina State Bar shall, prior to the first day of July of each year, pay to the secretary-treasurer an annual membership fee in an amount determined by the Council but not to exceed three hundred twenty-five dollars ~~(\$325.00)~~ (\$325.00), plus a surcharge of fifty dollars (\$50.00) for the implementation of Article 22I of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes.

...

(c) The fees shall be disbursed by the secretary-treasurer on the order of the Council. The fifty dollar (\$50.00) surcharge shall be sent on a monthly schedule to the State Board of Elections. The secretary-treasurer shall annually, at a time and in a law magazine or daily newspaper to be prescribed by the Council, publish an account of the financial transactions of the Council in a form to be prescribed by it. The secretary-treasurer shall compile and keep currently correct from the names and mailing addresses forwarded to the secretary-treasurer and from any other available sources of information a list of members of the North Carolina State Bar and furnish to the clerk of the superior court in each county, not later than the first day of October in each year, a list showing the name and address of each attorney for that county who has not complied with the provisions of this Article. The name of each of the active members who are in arrears in the payment of membership fees shall be furnished to the presiding judge by the clerk of the superior court of each county wherein the member or members reside, and the court shall thereupon take action that is necessary and proper. The names and addresses of attorneys so certified shall be kept available to the public. The Secretary of Revenue is hereby directed to supply the secretary-treasurer, from records of license tax payments, with any information for which the secretary-treasurer may call in order to enable the secretary-treasurer to comply with this requirement.

The list submitted to several clerks of the superior court shall also be submitted to the Council and it shall take the action thereon that is necessary and proper."

SECTION 14.4. G.S. 105-159.2 is reenacted as it existed immediately before its repeal and reads as rewritten:

"§ 105-159.2. Designation of tax to North Carolina Public Campaign Fund.

(a) Allocation to the North Carolina Public Campaign Fund. – To ensure the financial viability of the North Carolina Public Campaign Fund established in Article ~~22D~~ 22I of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes, the Department must allocate to that Fund three dollars (\$3.00) from

the income taxes paid each year by each individual with an income tax liability of at least that amount, if the individual agrees. A taxpayer must be given the opportunity to indicate an agreement or objection to that allocation in the manner described in subsection (b) of this section. In the case of a married couple filing a joint return, each individual must have the option of agreeing or objecting to the allocation. The amounts allocated under this subsection to the Fund must be credited to it on a monthly basis.

...."

SECTION 14.5. G.S. 163-278.5 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.5. Scope of Article; severability.

The provisions of this Article apply to primaries and elections for North Carolina offices and to North Carolina referenda and do not apply to primaries and elections for federal offices or offices in other States or to non-North Carolina referenda. Any provision in this Article that regulates a non-North Carolina entity does so only to the extent that the entity's actions affect elections for North Carolina offices or North Carolina referenda.

The provisions of this Article are severable. If any provision is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the invalidity does not affect other provisions of the Article that can be given effect without the invalid provision.

This section applies to Articles ~~and [Article]~~ 22I and 22M of the General Statutes to the same extent that it applies to this Article."

SECTION 14.6. G.S. 163-278.13 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(k) In order to make meaningful the provisions of Article 22I of this Chapter, the following provisions shall apply with respect to candidates for justice of the Supreme Court and judge of the Court of Appeals:

(1) No candidate shall accept, and no contributor shall make to that candidate, a contribution in any election exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), except as provided for elsewhere in this subsection.

(2) A candidate may accept, and a family contributor may make to that candidate, a contribution not exceeding two thousand dollars (\$2,000) in an election if the contributor is that candidate's parent, child, brother, or sister.

As used in this subsection, "candidate" is also a political committee authorized by the candidate for that candidate's election. Nothing in this subsection shall prohibit a candidate or the spouse of that candidate from making a contribution or loan secured entirely by that individual's assets to that candidate's own campaign."

SECTION 14.7. Section 38.1(a) of S.L. 2013-381 reads as rewritten:

"SECTION 38.1(a) Article 22D of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is ~~repealed, except that G.S. 163-278.69 is repealed effective upon exhaustion of the funds for publication of the Judicial Voter Guide, repealed.~~"

SECTION 14.8. Sections 21.1(i), 21.1(j), and 21.1(l) of S.L. 2013-360 and Sections 38.1(l), 38.1(m), and 38.1(o) of S.L. 2013-381 are repealed.

SECTION 14.9. Sections 14.1, 14.2, and 14.5 through 14.8 of this Part are effective when this Part becomes law, provided that distributions from the Fund shall begin in the 2026 election year. G.S. 163-278.152(b)(5), as enacted by Section 14.2 of this Part, and Section 14.3 of this Part become effective January 1, 2026, and apply to the membership fees due for 2026. Section 14.4 of this Part is effective for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2026. The remainder of this Part is effective when it becomes law.

PART XV. CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS' VOTING RIGHTS RESTORED

SECTION 15.1. G.S. 13-1 reads as rewritten:

"§ 13-1. Restoration of citizenship.

Any person convicted of a crime, whereby the rights of citizenship are forfeited, shall have such rights automatically restored upon the occurrence of any one of the following conditions:

(1) ~~The unconditional discharge of an inmate, of a probationer, or of a parolee by the agency of the State having jurisdiction of that person or of a defendant under a suspended sentence by the court.~~ release from active punishment to a period of post-release supervision or parole of a person whose sentence was not suspended by the court.

(1a) Upon the suspension of an active sentence resulting in the imposition of an intermediate or community punishment.

...."

SECTION 15.2. G.S. 13-2(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) The agency, department, or court having jurisdiction over the ~~inmate, probationer, parolee or defendant person~~ at the time his the person's rights of citizenship are restored under the provisions of G.S. 13-1(1) or (1a) shall immediately issue a certificate or order in duplicate evidencing the ~~offender's unconditional person's~~ discharge and specifying the restoration of ~~his~~ the person's rights of citizenship.

The original of such certificate or order shall be promptly transmitted to the clerk of the General Court of Justice in the county where the official record of the case from which the conviction arose is filed. The clerk shall then file the certificate or order without charge with the official record of the case."

SECTION 15.3. G.S. 163-82.14(c) reads as rewritten:

"(c) Conviction of a Felony. – In order to remove the names of ineligible individuals from the list of eligible voters in this State, the following shall occur:

(1) At a minimum of once per week, the Executive Director shall compile a list of individuals against whom a final judgment of conviction of a felony within this State has been entered. The Executive Director shall report to each appropriate county board of elections the names of individuals from that county appearing on such list each ~~week-week~~ and whose rights have been forfeited and not yet restored under G.S. 13-1.

(2) At a minimum of once per week, the Executive Director shall compile a list of individuals against whom a federal conviction has been reported, based on a notice of conviction sent by a United States Attorney pursuant to section 8(g) of the National Voter Registration Act. The Executive Director shall report to each appropriate county board of elections the names of individuals from that county appearing on such list each ~~week-week~~ and whose rights have been forfeited and not yet restored under G.S. 13-1.

(3) When a county board of elections receives a notice pursuant to subdivision (1) or (2) of this subsection relating to a resident of that county and that person is registered to vote in that county, the county board of elections shall, after giving 30 days' written notice to the voter at the address associated with that voter registration, and if the voter makes no objection, remove the person's name from its registration records. If the voter notifies the county board of elections of his objection to the removal within 30 days of the notice, the chair of the county board of elections shall enter a challenge under G.S. 163-85(c)(5), and the notice the county board of elections received pursuant to this subsection shall be prima facie evidence for the preliminary hearing that the registrant was convicted of a ~~felony-felony~~ and the registrant's citizenship rights have not been restored."

PART XV-A. REPEAL OF CERTAIN ELECTION LAWS

SECTION 15A.1. S.L. 2023-140 is repealed.

SECTION 15A.2. Subpart III-A of S.L. 2024-57 is repealed.

PART XVI. PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS OF THIS ACT

SECTION 16.1. It is unlawful to try to evade the reporting and disclosure requirements of Parts X through XIII of this act by structuring, or attempting to structure, any solicitation, contribution, donation, expenditure, disbursement, or other transaction. The penalty for any violation of these Parts of the act shall be not less than the amount contributed or undisclosed or greater than double that amount contributed or undisclosed.

PART XVII. SEVERABILITY

SECTION 17.1. If any provision of this act or its application is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this act that can be given effect without the invalid provisions or application and, to this end, the provisions of this act are severable.

PART XVIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

SECTION 18.1. Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.