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S T A T E   O F   R H O D E   I S L A N D

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2017

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A N   A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

Introduced By: Representatives Coughlin, and Johnston

Date Introduced: March 01, 2017

Referred To: House Judiciary

(Secretary of State)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 　　　　SECTION 1. Section 17-9.1-7 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-9.1 entitled

2 "Registration of Voters" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 　　　　**17-9.1-7. Registration at the division of motor vehicles.**

4 　　　　(a) Every person applying at the division of motor vehicles for a driver's license or a

5 renewal of the license, or personal identification document issued by the division of motor

6 vehicles, and who is or may be by the next general election qualified to vote, shall be ~~afforded the~~

7 ~~opportunity to register~~ registered to vote, or if previously registered, be afforded the opportunity

8 to change their address for voting purposes.

9 　　　　(b) The application to register to vote must be offered simultaneously with the application

10 for the driver's license or renewal of it or personal identification document. Division of motor

11 vehicles employees must provide to applicants for driver's licenses, license renewal, or personal

12 identification documents the same level of assistance and instruction with respect to the

13 application to register to vote as is provided with respect to the application for driver's licenses,

14 renewal of the license, or personal identification documents; provided, that ~~separate signatures~~

15 one signature ~~shall~~ may be ~~required~~ sufficient on the application for driver's license, renewal of

16 the license, or personal identification document and the application to register to vote. The

17 applicant ~~may~~ shall be afforded the opportunity to decline to register to vote ~~by failing to sign the~~

18 ~~voter registration form.~~ If previously registered, the applicant shall be afforded the opportunity to

19 change their address for voting purposes. In order to protect the privacy of those who do not wish

1   to register to vote for any reason, the failure of an applicant for a driver's license or renewal of it

2   or a personal identification document to ~~sign the voter registration form~~ register to vote may not

3   be used for any purposes other than to determine the person's voter registration status.

4   (c) (1) The voter registration application shall contain the registrant's name, residence

5   address, mailing address if different from residence address, date of birth, and registrant's

6   signature and date of affixation of signature, and may include any other information,

7   certifications, and declarations, including those made under the penalty of perjury, that may be

8   required by the state board in order to administer a single and unified system of voter registration

9   in accordance with applicable state and federal laws which shall enable duly registered voters to

10   vote in all elections in their respective voting districts including, elections for federal officers.

11   The voter registration application must also include, in print identical to that used in the

12   attestation portion of the form, the following:

13   (i) The penalties provided by law for submitting a false voter registration;

14   (ii) A statement that, if the applicant declines to register to vote, his or her decision will

15   remain confidential and be used only for voter registration purposes; and

16   (iii) A statement that, if the applicant does register to vote, information regarding the

17   office or branch of the division of motor vehicles to which the application was submitted will

18   remain confidential, to be used only for voter registration purposes.

19   (2) It shall be the responsibility of the division of motor vehicles to print and to have

20   available at all time a sufficient number of voter registration forms in order to carry out the

21   provisions of this section.

22   (d) The completed voter registration application shall be transmitted by the division of

23   motor vehicles to the central voter registration system mandated pursuant to § 17-6-1.2 not later

24   than the next business day after the date of acceptance by the division of motor vehicles.

25   Transmission shall be made by electronic means as prescribed by the secretary of state, and shall

26   be in an electronic form compatible with the voter registration system maintained by the secretary

27   of state. ~~For each registration electronically transmitted, a hard copy will be provided to the~~

28   ~~appropriate local board of canvassers.~~

29   (e) Any person who has fully and correctly completed an application to register to vote at

30   the division of motor vehicles is presumed to be registered as of the date of the acceptance of the

31   registration by the division of motor vehicles, subject to verification of the registration by the

32   local board as provided in § 17-9.1-25.

33   (f) Pursuant to §17-9.1-11, the division of motor vehicles shall not transmit the voter

34   registration of any applicant, who fails to certify that they are a citizen of the United States.

1   (g) If a person who is ineligible to vote becomes registered to vote pursuant to this

2   section, that person's registration shall be presumed to be deemed officially authorized and not be

3   deemed attributable to or the fault of that person. Notwithstanding the foregoing, anyone who

4   knowingly and willfully provides false information pursuant to this section shall be subject to

5   prosecution under §17-9.1-12.

6   (f)(h) The state board of elections shall have the authority to adopt regulations to

7   implement and administer the provisions of this section, including all registrations taken at the

8   division of motor vehicles.

9   (i)(1) In accordance with Section 7 of the Federal National Voter Registration Act of

10   1993, other applicable state government agencies that the secretary verifies already collect

11   documents that would provide proof of eligibility, including age, citizenship and residence

12   address, may follow the procedures for automatic voter registration enumerated for the division of

13   motor vehicles as described in subsections (b) through (d) of this section.

14   (2) Any additional agencies that are designated for automatic registration must follow the

15   rules and protocols established in this section for the division of motor vehicles.

16   (i) Effective date. The provisions of this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after the

17   administrator of the division of motor vehicles certifies in writing to the general assembly that the

18   Rhode Island motor vehicle licensing system (RIMS) computer system is capable of meeting the

19   requirements set forth in this act. The administrator of the division of motor vehicles shall consult

20   with the secretary prior to making this determination about the computer system.

21   SECTION 2. This act shall take effect thirty (30) days after the administrator of the

22   division of motor vehicles certifies in writing to the general assembly that the Rhode Island motor

23   vehicle licensing system (RIMS) computer system is capable of meeting the requirements set

24   forth in the act.

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EXPLANATION

BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

OF

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1   This act would provide that persons who apply to the division of motor vehicles for a

2   driver's license, its renewal or a personal identification document shall simultaneously register to

3   vote, unless they expressly decline to do so. It would also require that the person certify that they

4   are an American citizen. It would also require intent to provide false voting registration

5   information to the department of motor vehicles, before a person can be criminally prosecuted.

6   This act would take effect thirty (30) days after the administrator of the division of motor

7   vehicles certifies in writing to the general assembly that the Rhode Island motor vehicle licensing

8   system (RIMS) computer system is capable of meeting the requirements set forth in the act.

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