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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- GENERAL PROVISIONS

Introduced By: Representatives Sanchez, Cruz, and Stewart

Date Introduced: February 28, 2025

Referred To: House State Government & Elections

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Chapter 30-14 of the General Laws entitled "General Provisions" is hereby  
2 amended by adding thereto the following section:

3           **30-14-7. Protecting Rhode Island against the use of nuclear weapons.**

4           (a) Short title. This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Safeguard Rhode Island  
5 against the use of nuclear weapons act".

6           (b) A special legislative commission is hereby established, consisting of eleven (11)  
7 members, all of whom shall be United States citizens who are residents of Rhode Island, and who  
8 credibly reflect the makeup of the state's population with respect to gender, cultural, and ancestral  
9 background and who shall have publicly applied for membership on the commission; one of whom  
10 shall be appointed by the speaker of the house, one of whom shall be appointed by the president of  
11 the senate; one of whom shall be appointed by the attorney general; and eight (8) of whom shall be  
12 appointed by the secretary of state in consultation with the governor.

13           (c) The application to serve on the special commission shall include:

14           (1) The intent of the applicant to advance the investigation established by this section;

15           (2) The city or town in which the applicant resides;

16           (3) The employment or retirement status of the applicant; and

17           (4) The applicant's interest in serving on the commission and their view of why they might  
18 make an important contribution to the work of the commission.

19           (d) The governor shall post the appointment opportunity on the official website of the state

1 within thirty (30) days of the passage of this section, and all applications for service on the  
2 commission shall be submitted within thirty (30) days of the posting of the appointment  
3 opportunity. All appointments to the commission shall be made no sooner than ninety (90) days  
4 nor later than one hundred twenty (120) days after the passage of this act.

5 (e) The purpose of the special legislative commission shall be to investigate and report on  
6 what measures may be necessary and appropriate to protect the environment, wildlife, culture, and  
7 population of Rhode Island from the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons and to contribute  
8 toward the total elimination of these weapons under multi-lateral negotiation per the auspices of  
9 the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty; the 2010 New Start Treaty; and the 2021 Treaty on the  
10 Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as provided for in Article 4 of said treaty. Topics to be addressed  
11 by the commission shall include, but not be limited to, the harms posed to Rhode Island by nuclear  
12 weapons such as:

13 (1) Physical destruction from explosions, fire, and radioactive contamination;

14 (2) Infrastructure collapse including roads, bridges, electricity, and telecommunication;

15 (3) Disruption of essential services such as food and fuel supply, financial systems,  
16 healthcare services, and housing;

17 (4) Environmental devastation, including the loss of natural resources, ecosystems, and  
18 biodiversity;

19 (5) Severe harm to the physical and mental well-being of Rhode Island residents; and

20 (6) Severe disruptions to Rhode Island from a nuclear attack on a nearby city or state (i.e.,  
21 New York or Boston) including radiation poisoning to organisms and water supplies, electrical  
22 blackouts, food supply interruptions, etc.

23 (e)(1) The commission's deliberations shall also touch on the probable inability of  
24 preventing the single, first use of a nuclear weapon from escalating into full-scale war; and the  
25 scientifically validated danger of a years-long "nuclear winter" which would follow such a war and  
26 would limit the growth of crops and lead to widespread human starvation.

27 (2) The commission shall also investigate measures and make recommendations to the  
28 government and people of Rhode Island including, but not limited to, financial, legislative, or legal  
29 measures to assist or encourage transition from nuclear weapons-related employment and  
30 commercial activities within the state to jobs and activities that instead addresses the climate crisis  
31 and other pressing social needs such as health care, housing, education, and elimination of poverty  
32 and discrimination.

33 (f) No later than thirty (30) days after appointment of the final member of the commission,  
34 the members shall meet and organize and shall elect co-chairpersons by majority vote. The

1 commission shall use procedures and decision-making per the currently in force rules of the Rhode  
2 Island senate. The commission's proceedings, meetings, and activities shall be subject to chapter  
3 46 of title 42. ("open meetings").

4 (g) The commission shall meet on a regular basis to research, gather evidence, and hear  
5 testimony and advice in the manner that the members of the commission determine is the most  
6 suitable for achieving its purpose. The commission shall hold at least five (5) public hearings across  
7 the state to gather public input and inform citizens and legislators about the humanitarian and  
8 environmental consequences of nuclear weapons use. These hearings shall address the potential  
9 impact of a nuclear explosion on Providence or Quonset Point, including direct destruction,  
10 radioactive fallout downwind, and long-term contamination. They shall also examine any potential  
11 diplomatic breakthroughs such as entry into force of the Treaty on the A Prohibition of Nuclear  
12 Weapons or other international diplomatic agreements aimed at reducing the threat of nuclear war.  
13 The topics of employment, technologies, and industries within the state devoted to both nuclear  
14 weapons and climate change shall be addressed. All members of the Rhode Island public shall be  
15 given a reasonable opportunity to offer their views and ideas related to the subjects under  
16 examination by the commission.

17 (h) If vacancies occur in the commission, the secretary of state shall fill them after  
18 accepting applications as in the original appointments.

19 (i) The members of the special commission shall receive no compensation for their  
20 services. The commission shall use state-owned public halls for the hearing venues without  
21 necessity of payments. All departments and agencies of the state shall furnish such advice and  
22 information, documentary and otherwise, to the commission and its agents as is deemed necessary  
23 by the commission to facilitate the purpose of this section. The joint committee on legislative  
24 services is hereby authorized and directed to provide suitable quarters for said commission.

25 (j) The commission shall report its findings and, if applicable, drafts of legislation to  
26 implement them to the general assembly, governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney  
27 general, and all members of the Rhode Island congressional legislation, as well as to the press and  
28 general public, no later than August 6, 2026.

29 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- GENERAL PROVISIONS

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1           This act would create a permanent special commission to investigate and report on the  
2 threat of nuclear weapons.

3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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