

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

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A N A C T

RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE--COURTS -- JUDICIAL
NOMINATING COMMISSION

Introduced By: Representatives Williams, Caldwell, Alzate, McEntee, and Vella-
Wilkinson

Date Introduced: January 16, 2020

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 8-16.1-2 of the General Laws in Chapter 8-16.1 entitled "Judicial
2 Selection" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **8-16.1-2. Judicial nominating commission.**

4 (a) There is hereby established an independent nonpartisan judicial nominating
5 commission which shall consist of nine (9) members, all of whom shall be residents of the state of
6 Rhode Island, and who shall be appointed as follows:

7 (1) Within seven (7) days after June 2, 1994:

8 (i) The speaker of the house of representatives shall submit to the governor a list of at
9 least three (3) attorneys;

10 (ii) The president of the senate shall submit to the governor a list of at least three (3)
11 persons who may be attorneys and/or members of the public;

12 (iii) The speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the senate shall
13 jointly submit to the governor a list of four (4) members of the public;

14 (iv) The minority leader of the house of representatives shall submit to the governor a list
15 of at least three (3) members of the public; and

16 (v) The minority leader of the senate shall submit to the governor a list of at least three
17 (3) members of the public.

18 (2) Within fourteen (14) days after June 2, 1994, the governor shall appoint to the

1 commission:

2 (i) One person from each of the lists submitted in accordance with subsection (a)(1) of
3 this section;

4 (ii) Three (3) attorneys, without regard to any of the lists; and

5 (iii) One member of the public, without regard to any of the lists.

6 (3) The governor and the nominating authorities hereunder shall exercise reasonable
7 efforts to encourage racial, ethnic, and gender diversity within the commission.

8 (b) Members of the commission shall serve for terms of four (4) years, except that, of the
9 members first appointed:

10 (1) The individual appointed from the list submitted by the minority leader of the house
11 of representatives and one of the attorneys appointed by the governor without regard to any of the
12 lists shall serve for one year;

13 (2) The individual appointed from the list submitted by the minority leader of the senate
14 and one of the attorneys appointed by the governor without regard to any of the lists shall serve
15 for two (2) years;

16 (3) The individual appointed from the list submitted jointly by the speaker of the house of
17 representatives and by the president of the senate and the member of the public appointed by the
18 governor without regard to any of the lists shall serve for three (3) years; and

19 (4) The individuals appointed from the lists submitted by the president of the senate and
20 by the speaker of the house of representatives and one of the attorneys appointed by the governor
21 without regard to any of the lists shall serve for four (4) years.

22 (c) No person shall be appointed at any time to serve more than one term as a member of
23 the commission; provided, however, that a person initially appointed to serve twelve (12) months
24 or less of a full four (4) year term may, upon expiration of that term, be reappointed to serve one
25 full term; and provided further, however, that each member shall continue to serve until his or her
26 successor is appointed and qualified. No commission member shall be a legislator, judge, or
27 elected official, or be a candidate for any public office, or hold any compensated federal, state, or
28 municipal public office or elected office in a political party during his or her tenure or for a period
29 of one year prior to appointment. No member of the commission may hold any other public office
30 (except that of notary public) under the laws of the United States, of this state, or of any other
31 governmental entity for which monetary compensation is received. No members shall be eligible
32 for appointment to a state judicial office during the period of time he or she is a commission
33 member and for a period of one year thereafter. No two (2) or more members of the commission
34 shall be members or employees of the same law firm, or employees of the same profit or

1 nonprofit corporation. Vacancies other than those arising through the expiration of a term shall be
2 filled for the unexpired portion of the term in the same manner as vacancies due to the expiration
3 of a term.

4 (d) A quorum consisting of five (5) members shall be necessary in order for the
5 commission to conduct any business. All names submitted to the governor by the commission
6 shall be approved by at least five (5) members of the commission voting in favor of each
7 selection.

8 (e) The commission shall have the power to adopt rules and procedures which aid in its
9 selection of the most highly qualified nominees for judicial office. The governor shall designate a
10 member of the commission to serve as chairperson, who shall serve in that capacity for the
11 duration of his or her tenure. All meetings of the commission shall be subject to the open
12 meetings law as defined in chapter 46 of title 42.

13 (f) The commission is hereby authorized and empowered to investigate the personal
14 background of each nominee as it relates to a determination of judicial fitness through the Rhode
15 Island state police and the attorney general's office, and to require full financial disclosure under
16 the provisions of chapter 14 of title 36.

17 (g) The commission shall direct the performance of such administrative duties as may be
18 required for the effective discharge of the obligations granted to the commission, and is hereby
19 empowered to engage the services of legal, secretarial, clerical, and investigative employees and
20 to make such other expenditures as are necessary for the effective performance of its functions.
21 Expenses for office space, staffing, and necessary monetary outlays shall be provided by the
22 department of administration as a separate line item in the state budget under the term "judicial
23 nominating commission."

24 (h) Each person appointed to the commission shall, prior to exercising any authority or
25 assuming any duties as a member of the commission, take an engagement of office in accordance
26 with § 36-1-2. The governor may remove a commission member from office for neglect of duty,
27 malfeasance in office, or conviction of a criminal offense. After a commission member is notified
28 of any allegations against her or him in writing, the commission member shall be entitled to one
29 public hearing prior to removal by the governor.

30 (i) The commission shall actively and aggressively solicit persons of color to apply for all
31 judicial appointments. The commission shall actively solicit persons of color who reside in the
32 State of Connecticut and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who are active, practicing
33 members of the Rhode Island bar; provided, they have acted as attorney of record in a minimum
34 of seven (7) matters before the Rhode Island courts, within the last two (2) years. It shall keep

1 [records of all persons of color who apply for a judicial appointment, the success rate of having](#)
2 [those names submitted to the governor for judicial appointment, and its recruiting methods. The](#)
3 [commission shall promulgate regulations which promote the diversification of the judicial](#)
4 [appointment applications' proof, consistent with this subsection.](#)

5 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 COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE--COURTS -- JUDICIAL
NOMINATING COMMISSION

1 This act would require that the judicial nominating commission actively and aggressively
2 solicit attorneys of color to apply for judicial appointments, including practicing members of the
3 Rhode Island Bar residing in border states and to promulgate regulations to promote that
4 objective.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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