

2019 -- S 0316

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

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A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS - CONDUCT OF ELECTION AND VOTING EQUIPMENT
AND SUPPLIES

Introduced By: Senators Goldin, Cano, Goodwin, Quezada, and Miller

Date Introduced: February 13, 2019

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 17-19 of the General Laws entitled "Conduct of Election and
2 Voting Equipment, and Supplies" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **17-19-55. Time off for voting.**

4 (a) Each employer shall allow any person entitled to vote to be absent from employment
5 on election day for not more than two (2) hours, while the polls are open, without penalty or
6 deduction from his or her usual salary or wages on account of such absence.

7 (b) The voter shall apply for a leave of absence, between two (2) and ten (10) regularly
8 scheduled working days, before the day of the scheduled election.

9 (c)(1) The employer may specify the hours during which the employee may be absent to
10 vote.

11 (2) In essential government, health, hospital, transportation, and communication services
12 and in production, manufacturing, and processing works, requiring continuity in operation, the
13 employer may, upon receipt of such request for a two (2) hour leave of absence, arrange and
14 schedule a calendar of time off for any and all of its employees for voting so as to avoid
15 impairment or disruption of essential services and operations. Provided, however, that every such
16 arranged schedule of time off for voting shall provide ample and convenient time and opportunity
17 for their employees to cast their votes, as herein provided.

18 (d) This section does not apply to employees who have three (3) or more consecutive

1 hours either between the opening of the polls and the beginning of their working shift, or between
2 the end of their working shift and the closing of the polls.

3 (e) The department of labor and training shall enforce the provisions of this chapter. In
4 effectuating such enforcement, the department shall establish a system utilizing multiple means to
5 receive noncompliance complaints of this chapter and to investigate them in a timely manner. The
6 department of labor and training shall coordinate implementation and enforcement of this chapter
7 and may promulgate appropriate guidelines or regulations for such purposes.

8 (f) Any person alleging a violation of this chapter shall have the right to file a complaint
9 with the department of labor and training within thirty (30) days of when the person knew or
10 should have known of the alleged violation.

11 (g) Effective July 1, 2020, the department of labor and training shall have the power to
12 impose penalties for violations of this section.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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1 This act would require employers to give their employees, who make a timely request,
2 two (2) hours of paid leave to vote. This act would be enforced by the department of labor and
3 training.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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