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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

AN ACT

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Introduced By: Senators Mack, Acosta, Valverde, Kallman, and Bell

Date Introduced: January 24, 2024

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 42-28.6 of the General Laws entitled "Law Enforcement Officers'
Bill of Rights" is hereby repealed in its entirety.

CHAPTER 42-28.6

Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights

42-28.6-1. Definitions Payment of legal fees.

As used in this chapter, the following words have the meanings indicated:

(1) "Law enforcement officer" means any permanently employed city or town police officer, state police officer, permanent law enforcement officer of the department of environmental management, or those employees of the airport corporation of Rhode Island who have been granted the authority to arrest by the director of said corporation. However this shall not include the chief of police and/or the highest ranking sworn officer of any of the departments including the director and deputy director of the airport corporation of Rhode Island.

(2)(i) "Hearing committee" means a committee which is authorized to hold a hearing on a complaint against a law enforcement officer and which consists of three (3) active or retired law enforcement officers from within the state of Rhode Island, other than chiefs of police, who have had no part in the investigation or interrogation of the law enforcement officer. The committee shall be composed of three (3) members; one member selected by the chief or the highest ranking officer of the law enforcement agency, one member selected by the aggrieved law enforcement officer and

1	the third member shall be selected by the other two (2) members. In the event that the other two (2)
2	members are unable to agree within five (5) days, then either member will make application to the
3	presiding justice of the superior court and the presiding justice shall appoint the third member who
4	shall be an active law enforcement officer. Upon written application by a majority of the hearing
5	committee, the presiding justice, in his or her discretion, may also appoint legal counsel to assist
6	the hearing committee.
7	(ii) The law enforcement agency and the law enforcement officer under investigation shall
8	each be responsible to pay fifty percent (50%) of the legal fee of the appointed legal counsel for
9	the hearing committee; provided, however, that on motion made by either party, the presiding
10	justice shall have the authority to make a different disposition as to what each party is required to
11	pay toward the appointed legal counsel's legal fee.
12	(3) "Hearing" means any meeting in the course of an investigatory proceeding, other than
13	an interrogation at which no testimony is taken under oath, conducted by a hearing committee for
14	the purpose of taking or adducing testimony or receiving evidence.
15	42-28.6-2. Conduct of investigation.
16	Whenever a law enforcement officer is under investigation or subjected to interrogation by
17	a law enforcement agency, for a non-criminal matter which could lead to disciplinary action,
18	demotion, or dismissal, the investigation or interrogation shall be conducted under the following
19	conditions:
20	(1) The interrogation shall be conducted at a reasonable hour, preferably at a time when
21	the law enforcement officer is on duty.
22	(2) The interrogation shall take place at an office within the department previously
23	designated for that purpose by the chief of police.
24	(3) The law enforcement officer under interrogation shall be informed of the name, rank,
25	and command of the officer in charge of the investigation, the interrogating officer, and all persons
26	present during the interrogation. All questions directed to the officer under interrogation shall be
27	asked by and through one interrogator.
28	(4) No complaint against a law enforcement officer shall be brought before a hearing
29	committee unless the complaint be duly sworn to before an official authorized to administer oaths.
30	(5) The law enforcement officer under investigation shall, prior to any interrogating, be
31	informed in writing of the nature of the complaint and of the names of all complainants.
32	(6) Interrogating sessions shall be for reasonable periods and shall be timed to allow for
33	such personal necessities and rest periods as are reasonably necessary.
34	(7) Any law enforcement officer under interrogation shall not be threatened with transfer,

2	(8) If any law enforcement officer under interrogation is under arrest, or is likely to be
3	placed under arrest as a result of the interrogation, he or she shall be completely informed of all his
4	or her rights prior to the commencement of the interrogation.
5	(9) At the request of any law enforcement officer under interrogation, he or she shall have
6	the right to be represented by counsel of his or her choice who shall be present at all times during
7	the interrogation. The interrogation shall be suspended for a reasonable time until representation
8	can be obtained.
9	(10) No statute shall abridge nor shall any law enforcement agency adopt any regulation
0	which prohibits the right of a law enforcement officer to bring suit arising out of his or her duties
1	as a law enforcement officer.
12	(11) No law enforcement agency shall insert any adverse material into any file of the officer
13	unless the officer has an opportunity to review and receive a copy of the material in writing, unless
14	the officer waives these rights in writing.
15	(12) No public statement shall be made prior to a decision being rendered by the hearing
16	committee and no public statement shall be made if the officer is found innocent unless the officer
17	requests a public statement; provided, however, that this subdivision shall not apply if the officer
18	makes a public statement. The foregoing shall not preclude a law enforcement agency, in a criminal
19	matter, from releasing information pertaining to criminal charges which have been filed against a
20	law enforcement officer, the officer's status of employment and the identity of any administrative
21	charges brought against said officer as a result of said criminal charges.
22	(13) No law enforcement officer shall be compelled to speak or testify before, or be
23	questioned by, any non-governmental agency.
24	42-28.6-3. Disclosure of personal information.
25	No law enforcement officer shall be required or requested to disclose any item of his or her
26	property, income, assets, source of income, debts, or personal or domestic expenditures (including
27	those of any member of his or her family or household) unless that information is necessary in
28	investigating a possible conflict of interest with respect to the performance of his or her official
29	duties, or unless the disclosure is required by law.
30	42-28.6-4. Right to hearing Notice request for hearing Selection of hearing
31	<u>committee.</u>
32	(a) If the investigation or interrogation of a law enforcement officer results in the
33	recommendation of some action, such as demotion, transfer, dismissal, loss of pay, reassignment,
34	or similar action which would be considered a punitive measure, then, before taking such action

2	to a hearing on the issues by a hearing committee. The law enforcement officer may be relieved of
3	duty subject to § 42-28.6-13 of this chapter, and shall receive all ordinary pay and benefits as he
4	or she would have if he or she were not charged.
5	Disciplinary action for violation(s) of departmental rules and/or regulations shall not be
6	instituted against a law enforcement officer under this chapter more than three (3) years after such
7	incident, except where such incident involves a potential criminal offense, in which case
8	disciplinary action under this chapter may be instituted at any time within the statutory period of
9	limitations for such offense.
10	(b) Notice under this section shall be in writing and shall inform the law enforcement
11	officer of the following:
12	(i) The nature of the charge(s) against him or her and, if known, the date(s) of the alleged
13	offense(s);
14	(ii) The recommended penalty;
15	(iii) The fact that he or she has five (5) days from receipt of the notice within which to
16	submit a written request for a hearing; and
17	(iv) The name and address of the officer to whom a written request for a hearing (and other
18	related written communications) should be addressed.
19	(c) The law enforcement officer shall, within five (5) days of his or her receipt of notice
20	given pursuant to subsection (b) herein, file a written request for hearing with the officer designated
21	in accordance with subdivision (b)(iv). Failure to file a written request for a hearing shall constitute
22	a waiver of his or her right to a hearing under this chapter; provided, however, that the presiding
23	justice of the superior court, upon petition and for good cause shown, may permit the filing of an
24	untimely request for hearing.
25	(d) The law enforcement officer shall provide the charging law enforcement agency with
26	the name of one active or retired law enforcement officer to serve on the hearing committee, within
27	five (5) days of the filing of his or her request for a hearing. Failure by the law enforcement officer
28	to file his or her filing committee selection within the time period shall constitute a waiver of his
29	or her right to a hearing under this chapter; provided, however, that the presiding justice of the
30	superior court, upon petition and for good cause shown, may permit the filing of an untimely
31	hearing committee selection by the officer. The charging law enforcement agency may impose the
32	recommended penalty during the pendency of any such petition.
33	(e) The charging law enforcement agency shall provide the law enforcement officer with
2/	the name of one active or retired law enforcement officer to serve on the bearing committee, within

2	enforcement agency to file its hearing committee selection within that time period shall constitute
3	a dismissal of all charges against the law enforcement officer, with prejudice; provided, however,
4	that the presiding justice of the superior court, upon petition and for good cause shown, and permit
5	the filing of an untimely hearing committee selection by the agency. Except as expressly provided
6	in § 42 28.6 13 of this chapter, no disciplinary action shall be taken against the officer by virtue
7	of the stated charges during the pendency of any such petition.
8	(f) Within five (5) days of the charging law enforcement agency's selection of a hearing
9	committee member, the hearing committee members selected by the officer and by the agency
10	shall:
11	(i) Jointly select a third hearing committee member, who shall serve as chairperson of the
12	hearing committee;
13	(ii) Petition the presiding justice of the superior court to select a third hearing committee
14	member, who shall be an active law enforcement officer, and who shall serve as chairperson of the
15	hearing committee; or
16	(iii) Agree to an extension of time, not to exceed thirty (30) days, for the selection of a third
17	hearing committee member.
18	(g) Law enforcement officers selected to serve on a hearing committee under this chapter
19	shall be relieved of duty for each day of actual hearing and shall be compensated by their respective
20	agencies at their ordinary daily rate of pay for each day actually spent in the conduct of the hearing
21	hereunder.
22	(h) Two (2) lists of active police officers available to serve as chairpersons of hearing
23	committees under this chapter shall be provided annually to the presiding justice of the superior
24	court. One list shall be provided by the Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association; the other shall be
25	appointed, jointly, by the Fraternal Order of Police and the International Brotherhood of Police
26	Officers. In selecting officers to serve as chairpersons of hearing committees under this chapter,
27	the presiding justice shall alternate between the two (2) lists so provided.
28	(i) Whenever a law enforcement officer faces disciplinary action as a result of criminal
29	charges, the provisions of subsections (c), (d), (e) and (f) shall be suspended pending the
30	adjudication of said criminal charges.
31	42-28.6-5. Conduct of hearing.
32	(a) The hearing shall be conducted by the hearing committee selected in accordance with
33	§ 42 28.6 4 of this chapter. Both the law enforcement agency and the law enforcement officer shall
2/1	he given apple opportunity to present evidence and argument with respect to the issues involved

2	(b) The hearing shall be convened at the call of the chair; shall commence within thirty
3	(30) days after the selection of a chairperson of the hearing committee; and shall be completed
4	within sixty (60) days of the commencement of the hearing. The hearing committee shall render a
5	written decision within thirty (30) days after the conclusion of the hearing. The time limits
6	established in this subsection may be extended by the presiding justice of the superior court for
7	good cause shown.
8	(c) Not less than ten (10) days prior to the hearing date, the charging law enforcement
9	agency shall provide to the law enforcement officer:
10	(i) A list of all witnesses, known to the agency at that time, to be called by the agency to
11	testify at the hearing;
12	(ii) Copies of all written and/or recorded statements by such witnesses in the possession of
13	the agency; and
14	(iii) A list of all documents and other items to be offered as evidence at the hearing.
15	(d) Not less than five (5) days prior to the hearing date, the law enforcement officer shall
16	provide to the charging law enforcement agency a list of all witnesses, known to the officer at that
17	time, to be called by the officer to testify at the hearing.
18	(e) Failure by either party to comply with the provisions of subsections (c) and (d) of this
19	section shall result in the exclusion from the record of the hearing of testimony and/or evidence not
20	timely disclosed in accordance with those subsections.
21	42-28.6-6. Evidence at hearing Hearing record.
22	(a) Evidence which possesses probative value commonly accepted by reasonable and
23	prudent persons in the conduct of their affairs shall be admissible and shall be given probative
24	effect. The hearing committee conducting the hearing shall give effect to the rules of privilege
25	recognized by law, and may exclude incompetent, irrelevant, immaterial, and unduly repetitious
26	evidence. All records and documents which any party desires to use shall be offered and made part
27	of the record.
28	(b) No statements, documents and/or other evidence and no copies of any statements,
29	documents and/or other evidence shall be presented to the hearing committee prior to the hearing.
30	(c) All proceedings before the hearing committee shall be recorded by stenographic record,
31	the expense of which shall be borne by the charging law enforcement agency. A copy of the record
32	shall be provided to the law enforcement officer or his or her attorney or representative of record
33	upon request.
34	42-28.6-7. Subpoena Oath Production of documents.

Both may be represented by counsel.

1	With respect to the subject of any investigation or hearing conducted pursuant to this
2	section, the hearing committee may subpoena witnesses and administer oaths or affirmations and
3	examine any individual under oath, and may require and compel the production of records, books,
4	papers, contracts, and other documents.
5	42-28.6-8. Witness fees.
6	Witness fees and mileage, if claimed, shall be allowed the same as for testimony in the
7	superior court. Witness fees, mileage, and the actual expenses necessarily incurred in securing
8	attendance of witnesses and their testimony shall be itemized, and shall be paid by the law
9	enforcement agency if the officer is ultimately found innocent.
10	42-28.6-9. Cross-examination and rebuttal.
11	Every party has the right of cross-examination of the witnesses who testify, and may submit
12	rebuttal evidence.
13	42-28.6-10. Judicial notice.
14	The hearing committee conducting the hearing may take notice of judicially cognizable
15	facts and, in addition, may take notice of general, technical, or scientific facts within its specialized
16	knowledge.
17	42-28.6-11. Decisions of hearing committee.
18	(a) The hearing committee shall be empowered to sustain, modify in whole or in part, or
19	reverse the complaint or charges of the investigating authority, as provided in § 42-28.6-4.
20	(b) Any decision, order, or action taken as a result of the hearing shall be in writing and
21	shall be accompanied by findings of fact. The findings shall consist of a concise statement upon
22	each issue in the case. Copies of the decision or order and accompanying findings and conclusions
23	shall be delivered or mailed promptly to the law enforcement officer or to his or her attorney or
24	representative of record and to the law enforcement agency or to its attorney or representative of
25	record.
26	(c) In any proceeding under this chapter, it shall be the burden of the charging law
27	enforcement agency to prove, by a fair preponderance of the evidence, that the law enforcement
28	officer is guilty of the offense(s) or violation(s) of which he or she is accused.
29	<u>42-28.6-12. Appeals.</u>
30	(a) Appeals from all decisions rendered by the hearing committee shall be to the superior
31	court in accordance with §§ 42 35 15 and 42 35 15.1. For purposes of this section, the hearing
32	committee shall be deemed an administrative agency and its final decision shall be deemed a final
33	order in a contested case within the meaning of §§ 42 35 15 and 42 35 15.1.
34	(b) Within thirty (30) days after the service of the complaint in accordance with § 42-35

(b) Within thirty (30) days after the service of the complaint in accordance with § 42-35-

15, or within further time allowed by the court, the hearing committee shall transmit to the reviewing court the original or a certified copy of the entire record of the proceeding under review. By stipulation of all parties to the review proceedings, the record may be shortened. Any party unreasonably refusing to stipulate to limit the record may be taxed by the court for the additional costs. The court may require or permit subsequent corrections or additions to the record.

42-28.6-13. Suspensions.

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- (a) The provisions of this chapter are not intended to prohibit suspensions by the chief or the highest ranking officer of the law enforcement agency.
- (b) Summary punishment of two (2) days' suspension without pay may be imposed for minor violations of departmental rules and regulations. Appeals of suspension under this subsection shall be subject to the grievance provisions of any applicable collective bargaining agreement.
- (c) Suspension may be imposed by the chief or the highest ranking sworn officer of the law enforcement agency when the law enforcement officer is under investigation—for a criminal felony matter. Any suspension shall consist of the law enforcement officer being relieved of duty, and he or she shall receive all ordinary pay and benefits as he or she would receive if he or she were not suspended. Suspension under this subsection shall not exceed one hundred eighty (180) days.
- (d) Suspension may be imposed by the chief or highest ranking sworn officer of the law enforcement agency when the law enforcement officer in under investigation for a misdemeanor criminal matter. Any such suspension shall consist of the law enforcement officer being relieved of duty, and he or she shall receive all ordinary pay and benefits as he or she would receive if he or she were not suspended. Suspension under this subsection shall not exceed thirty (30) days; provided, however, that if an officer is charged with a misdemeanor offense the chief or highest ranking sworn officer of the law enforcement agency may continue said suspension with pay up to a total of one hundred and eighty (180) days. If the disposition of the criminal matter does not take place within one hundred eighty (180) days of the commencement of such suspension, the law enforcement officer may be suspended without pay and benefits; provided, however, that the officer's entitlement to such medical insurance, dental insurance, disability insurance and life insurance as is available to all other officers within the agency shall not be suspended. The law enforcement officer may petition the presiding justice of the superior court for a stay of the suspension without pay, and such stay shall be granted upon a showing that said delay in the criminal disposition was outside the law enforcement officer's control. In the event the law enforcement officer is acquitted of any misdemeanor related thereto, the officer shall be forthwith reinstated and reimbursed all salary and benefits that have not been paid during the suspension period.

(e) Suspension may be imposed by the chief or highest ranking sworn officer of the law
enforcement agency when the law enforcement officer is under investigation for a noncrimina
matter. Any such suspension shall consist of the law enforcement officer being relieved of duty.
and he or she shall receive all ordinary pay and benefits as he or she would receive if he or she were
not suspended. Suspension under this subsection shall not exceed fifteen (15) days or any other
time frame established under the provisions of any applicable collective bargaining agreement.
(f) Suspension may be imposed by the chief or highest ranking sworn officer of the law
enforcement agency upon receipt of notice or disciplinary action in accordance with § 42-28.6 4(b)
of this chapter in which termination or demotion is the recommended punishment. Any such
suspension shall consist of the law enforcement officer being relieved of duty, and he or she shall
receive all ordinary pay and benefits as he or she would receive if he or she were not so suspended.
(g) Any law enforcement officer who is charged, indicted or informed against for a felony
or who is convicted of and incarcerated for a misdemeanor may be suspended without pay and
benefits at the discretion of the agency or chief or highest ranking sworn officers; provided,
however, that the officer's entitlement to medical insurance, dental insurance, disability insurance
and life insurance as is available to all other officers within the agency shall not be suspended. Ir
the event that the law enforcement officer is acquitted of any felony related thereto, the officer shall
be reinstated and reimbursed forthwith for all salary and benefits that have not been paid during the
suspension period.
(h) Any law enforcement officer who is convicted of a felony shall, pending the prosecution
of an appeal, be suspended without pay and benefits; provided, however, that the officer's
entitlement to such medical insurance, dental insurance, disability insurance and life insurance as
is available to all other officers within the agency shall not be suspended. Whenever, upon appeal
such conviction is reversed, the suspension under this subsection shall terminate and the law
enforcement officer shall forthwith be paid the salary and benefits that would have been paid to
him or her during that period of suspension.
(i) Any law enforcement officer who pleads guilty or no contest to a felony charge or whose
conviction of a felony has, after or in the absence of a timely appeal, become final may be dismissed
by the law enforcement agency and, in the event of such dismissal, other provisions of this chapter
shall not apply.
42-28.6-14. Retaliation for exercising rights.
(a) No law enforcement officer shall be discharged, demoted, disciplined, or denied
promotion, transfer or reassignment, or otherwise discriminated against in regard to his or her

employment or be threatened with any such treatment, by reason of his or her exercise of or demand

1	for rights granted in this subtate, or by reason of the lawful exercise of his or her constitutional
2	rights.
3	(b) Any law enforcement officer who is denied any right afforded by this subtitle may
4	apply, either individually or through his or her certified or recognized employee organization, to
5	the superior court where he or she resides or is regularly employed for any order directing the law
6	enforcement agency to show cause why the right should not be afforded.
7	42-28.6-15. Exclusivity of remedy.
8	The remedies contained herein shall be the sole and exclusive remedies for all law
9	enforcement officers subject to the provisions of this chapter.
10	42-28.6-16. Immunity of hearing committee members.
11	No member of a hearing committee constituted in accordance with the provisions of this
12	chapter shall be held civilly liable for any breach of his or her duties as such member, provided that
13	nothing herein shall eliminate or limit the liability of a qualified member:
14	(1) For acts or omissions not in good faith or which involve intentional misconduct or a
15	knowing violation of law; or
16	(2) For any transaction from which such member derived an improper personal benefit; or
17	(3) For any malicious, willful or wanton act.
18	42-28.6-17. Severability.
19	If any provision of this chapter or other application thereof shall for any reason be judged
20	invalid such a judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the remainder of the law, but shall be
21	confined in its effect to the provisions or application directly involved in the controversy giving
22	rise to the judgment.
23	SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.
	====== LC003788

EXPLANATION

BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

OF

AN ACT

RELATING TO STATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT -- LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

This act would repeal the law enforcement officers' bill of rights, chapter 42-28.6 of the general laws, in its entirety.

This act would take effect upon passage.

LC003788