

2024 -- S 2894

LC005030

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

Introduced By: Senators Raptakis, Tikoian, LaMountain, Burke, McKenney, F. Lombardi, Britto, and Sosnowski

Date Introduced: March 22, 2024

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

(Secretary of State)

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 17-9.1-23 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-9.1 entitled
2 "Registration of Voters" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **17-9.1-23. Party designation.**

4 (a) Whenever any person registers to vote, that person may designate his or her party
5 affiliation, or that person may designate that he or she is not affiliated with any political party. The
6 information shall be recorded on a form prescribed by the state board of elections.

7 (b) Any person who is already registered to vote and wishes to designate his or her party
8 affiliation may do so by submitting to that person's local board of canvassers a form provided by
9 the state board designating his or her party affiliation and certifying to the fact on the form furnished
10 for that purpose.

11 ~~(c) Whenever any person participates in a party primary, that act shall serve as identifying~~
12 ~~the person as being affiliated with the party in whose primary that person has participated and the~~
13 ~~local board shall record the affiliation on the appropriate form. For the purposes of this section,~~
14 ~~"participating in a party primary" does not include the circulation or signing of nomination papers.~~

15 Whenever an unaffiliated voter participates in a party primary, their party affiliation shall
16 remain unaffiliated. For purposes of this section, "participating in a party primary" includes casting
17 a ballot by mail, early in-person, or on election day, or by signing a precinct, mail, or provisional
18 ballot application.

19 (d) A form prescribed by the state board of elections for the purpose of disaffiliating from

1 a political party shall be provided at polling locations and early voting locations.

2 (e) No person shall be affiliated with any political party solely because of that person's
3 circulation or signing of nomination papers of a candidate to be voted for in any primary.

4 (f) Election officials shall be authorized to inform voters and post notices at polling
5 locations, early voting locations, and to voters casting a ballot by mail that whenever an unaffiliated
6 voter participates in a party primary, their party affiliation shall remain unaffiliated, and that no
7 action or form is necessary to preserve a voter's existing unaffiliated status.

8 SECTION 2. Sections 17-15-21 and 17-15-24 of the General Laws in Chapter 17-15
9 entitled "Primary Elections" are hereby amended to read as follows:

10 **17-15-21. Identification of party voters.**

11 Before permitting any person to vote in a primary election, the warden or clerk and
12 bipartisan pair of supervisors assigned by the warden shall ascertain from the voting record
13 appearing on the certified voting list that the voter is not disqualified to vote by the provisions of §
14 17-15-24. The bipartisan pair of supervisors shall provide the voter with the corresponding
15 computer ballot for the primary election in which the voter is eligible and desiring to vote. The
16 warden shall take any steps that may be necessary to assure that each voter is given the computer
17 ballot upon which the voter is eligible to vote. Any person who is not affiliated with any political
18 party, and is otherwise qualified to vote, may participate in a primary election of either party.

19 **17-15-24. Disqualification by activity in other party.**

20 ~~No person shall be entitled to vote in the primary election of any political party who has~~
21 ~~voted in a primary election as a member of any other political party and has not changed his or her~~
22 ~~party designation as provided in chapter 9.1 of this title or has designated his or her affiliation with~~
23 ~~any other political party, as set forth in chapter 9.1 of this title.~~ No person shall be debarred from
24 voting in a party primary solely because of that person's signing of nomination papers of a
25 candidate to be voted for at any primary. A person having designated his or her party affiliation as
26 set forth in chapter 9.1 of this title shall be deemed to have taken part in the primary as a member
27 of that political party, and shall be debarred from voting in the primary as a member of the opposite
28 political party until that person has changed his or her party affiliation as provided in chapter 9.1
29 of this title. Any person who is not affiliated with any political party shall not be debarred from
30 voting in a party primary due to their participation in a previous party primary while not affiliated
31 with a party.

32 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on June 1, 2024.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO ELECTIONS -- REGISTRATION OF VOTERS

1 This act would allow non-affiliated party voters to vote in party primaries, without
2 becoming an affiliated party voter.

3 This act would take effect on June 1, 2024.

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