

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2025

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SENATE BILL DRS35160-LUae-29

Short Title: Safeguard Fair Elections. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Chaudhuri, Murdock, and Smith (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO PROVIDE INCREASED PROTECTIONS FOR VOTERS AND ELECTIONS  
3 OFFICIALS AGAINST VARIOUS FORMS OF INTERFERENCE WITH AN ELECTION  
4 AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6  
7 **PART I. VOTER PROTECTIONS AGAINST INTIMIDATION, THREATS, OR**  
8 **COERCION**

9 **SECTION 1.1.** Article 22 of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by  
10 adding the following new sections to read:

11 "**§ 163-275.1. Voter intimidation, threats, or coercion.**

12 (a) As used in this section, the following definitions shall apply:

13 (1) Coerce. – To compel another person's conduct using force or threat of force,  
14 whether that force is physical or economic, and is judged not in isolation but  
15 in the context and background of contemporaneous events.

16 (2) Intimidate. – To willfully engage in conduct without legal purpose that would  
17 cause a reasonable person to fear for the person's safety or the safety of the  
18 person's immediate family or close personal associates by placing the person  
19 in fear of death, bodily injury, or continued harassment.

20 (3) Threaten. – To express an intention to harm another.

21 (b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any person who does any of the  
22 following is guilty of a Class H felony:

23 (1) Threatens or attempts to threaten any person:

24 a. For voting or attempting to vote.

25 b. For voting or attempting to vote for or against a particular candidate.

26 c. For registering to vote.

27 d. For urging or aiding any individuals to vote or attempting to vote, as  
28 allowed by law.

29 e. For exercising any lawful powers or duties as an election official or  
30 enlisting another person to do the same.

31 For purposes of this section, a person shall be found to have threatened another  
32 person if the person knew or reasonably should have known that his or her  
33 actions would produce that effect.

34 (2) Knowingly challenges a person's right to vote on fraudulent or spurious  
35 grounds.



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(3) Engages in mass, indiscriminate, and groundless challenging of voters solely for the purpose of preventing voters from voting or to delay the process of voting or the lawful and orderly administration of an election.

(4) Fraudulently advises any person that the person is not eligible to vote or is not registered to vote when in fact that person is eligible or registered to vote.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an employer, whether a corporation or natural person or any other person who employs, who shall, in paying its employees the salary or wages due the employees, do any of the following shall be guilty of a Class H felony:

(1) Enclose the employees' pay in pay envelopes upon which or in which there is written or printed the name of any candidate or any political mottoes, devices, or arguments containing threats, express or implied, intended or calculated to influence the political opinions or actions of the employees.

(2) In any way, express or implied, communicate that the employees' pay or continued employment is conditioned on voting or not voting, or voting or not voting for a specific candidate.

(d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any person who intimidates or coerces or attempts to intimidate or coerce any person for any of the following is guilty of a Class A1 misdemeanor:

(1) Voting or attempting to vote.

(2) Voting or attempting to vote for or against a particular candidate.

(3) Urging or aiding any persons to vote or attempt to vote, as allowed by law.

(4) Exercising any lawful powers or duties as an election official or enlisting another person for the purpose of doing the same.

For purposes of this section, a person shall be found to have intimidated or coerced another person if the person knew or reasonably should have known that his or her actions would produce that effect.

**"§ 163-275.2. Right of action.**

Any person aggrieved by a violation of G.S. 163-275.1 may bring an action for preventive relief, including an application in a district court for a permanent or temporary injunction, restraining order, or other order. In any action commenced pursuant to this section, the court, in its discretion, may allow the prevailing party reasonable attorneys' fees.

**"§ 163-275.3. Restitution; Fund.**

(a) In addition to any other fine or penalty imposed by this Article, the court may order any person convicted of violating this Article to pay a restitution fine, the amount of which shall be determined by the court and be commensurate with the seriousness of the offense. The moneys derived from the fine assessed pursuant to this subsection shall be deposited in the Voter Intimidation Restitution Fund created under subsection (b) of this section.

(b) The Voter Intimidation Restitution Fund (Fund) is hereby established in the State treasury. Upon appropriation by the General Assembly, moneys in the Fund shall be allocated to the State Board of Elections to be used in voter education campaigns addressing the specific crime committed by anyone convicted of violations of this Article. The funds shall also be used for the administrative costs associated with distribution of the Fund."

**PART II. ELECTION OFFICIAL AND POLL WORKER INTIMIDATION**

**SECTION 2.1.** Article 22 of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes reads as rewritten:

"Article 22.

"Corrupt Practices and Other Offenses Against the Elective Franchise.

"Part 1. Criminal Penalties for Voter Interference.

...

**"§ 163-278. Duty of investigating and prosecuting violations of this Article.**

...



1           (2) Public official. – An individual legally authorized or permitted to execute laws  
2           or make decisions on behalf of any government, including any branch,  
3           subdivision, or agency of the State or any county, city, district, or other local  
4           government. "Public official" includes, but is not limited to, elected and  
5           appointed officials, government employees, and people who are officially  
6           selected or acknowledged as acting on behalf of the government, such as  
7           election judges and election poll workers.

8           (3) Substantial evidence. – Any relevant evidence that a reasonable person might  
9           accept as adequate to support a conclusion.

10 **"§ 163-183.3. Vote counting and election certification based on fact.**

11           (a) No public official shall perform or communicate the intention to perform an official  
12 act in which that official, without substantial evidence, refuses to certify the actual results or  
13 count of an election.

14           (b) If any public official performs or communicates the intention to perform an official  
15 act in violation of subsection (a) of this section, the performance or communication shall  
16 constitute an automatic resignation from office and any official act in violation of subsection (a)  
17 of this section considered null and void.

18           (c) A willful violation of subsection (a) of this section shall be a Class 1 misdemeanor,  
19 punishable by a fine of up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).

20           (d) This section shall be enforced in addition to any other existing civil and criminal  
21 penalties established under this Chapter."

22           **SECTION 3.2.** This Part is effective when it becomes law and applies to elections  
23 held on or after that date.

24  
25 **PART IV. PROHIBITING THIRD-PARTY FORENSIC AUDIT**

26           **SECTION 4.1.** G.S. 163-182.12A reads as rewritten:

27 **"§ 163-182.12A. Post-election audits.**

28           (a) After conducting a post-election audit for each election as required by this Chapter,  
29 except for a general election, the State Board shall produce a report which summarizes the audit,  
30 including the rationale for and the findings of the audit. After conducting a post-election audit  
31 for a general election, the State Board shall produce a report which shall include all of the  
32 following:

33           (1) A summary of the types of post-election audits required by law and the  
34 requirements for conducting each of the audits.

35           (2) A summary of the results of each of the post-election audits described in  
36 subdivision (1) of this subsection.

37           (3) A detailed description of each of the post-election audits described in  
38 subdivision (1) of this subsection, including any issues that could have  
39 affected the outcome of the election and the manner in which those issues  
40 were resolved.

41           (4) A description of any systemic issues that were identified during the  
42 post-election audits and any recommendations on the manner in which those  
43 issues should be addressed to ensure election security and integrity.

44           (5) The ways in which the public were allowed to observe and comment on the  
45 conduct of the post-election audits, as authorized by law.

46           (6) Any other matters deemed appropriate by the State Board.

47           (a1) When conducting post-election audits, the State Board shall implement best practices  
48 to ensure, at a minimum, each audit complies with the following:

49           (1) Is conducted by nonpartisan officials with expertise in elections.

50           (2) Is routine and conducted prior to State certification.

51           (3) Is transparent and open to the public.

- 1           (4) Preserves the integrity of election systems and voting equipment.
- 2           (5) Preserves ballot secrecy and voter privacy.
- 3           (6) Is conducted according to statistically sound methodology.
- 4           (7) Requires that any State or county procedures governing audits be established
- 5                 before Election Day and before results are known.

6           (a2) No public official shall provide funding for or participate in a post-election audit or  
7 review that fails to comply with the best practices required by this section.

8           (b) Each report required by subsection (a) of this section shall be submitted to the Joint  
9 Legislative Elections Oversight Committee and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on  
10 General Government within 10 business days of the date the audit is completed."

11           **SECTION 4.2.** Article 15A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by  
12 adding a new section to read:

13 **"§ 163-182.12B. Risk-limiting audits.**

14           In addition to any other audits required under State or federal law, the State Board shall  
15 conduct a risk-limiting audit after the general election in each county in accordance with  
16 requirements established by the State Board. However, an audit conducted in accordance with  
17 this section shall not change the results of an election. For purposes of this section, a  
18 "risk-limiting audit" is a hand-to-eye recount of a randomly selected sample of ballots in a contest  
19 that provides strong statistical evidence that the machine-counted results are correct and is based  
20 on a "risk-limit"; the largest chance that an incorrect outcome of a contest could escape correction  
21 by the audit."

22  
23 **PART V. PREVENT IMPEDIMENT/INTERFERENCE WITH ELECTION PROCESS**

24           **SECTION 5.1.** G.S. 163-45.1 reads as rewritten:

25 **"§ 163-45.1. Observers.**

26           (a) For purposes of this section, "observer" is defined as an individual appointed pursuant  
27 to this section to observe the voting process at a voting place.

28           (b) Observers may be appointed in accordance with the following:

- 29           (1) The chair of each political party in the county may designate two registered  
30 voters of the county to serve as observers at each voting place in that county  
31 in which the political party has a candidate appearing on the ballot.
- 32           (2) The chair of each political party in the county may designate up to 10  
33 registered voters of the county to serve at any voting place in the county in  
34 which the political party has a candidate appearing on the ballot.
- 35           (3) The chair of each political party in the State may designate up to 100 registered  
36 voters of the State to serve at any voting place in the State in which the  
37 political party has a candidate appearing on the ballot.
- 38           (4) An unaffiliated candidate or the unaffiliated candidate's campaign manager  
39 may designate two observers to serve at each voting place in which that  
40 unaffiliated candidate appears on the ballot.

41           (b1) Persons appointed as observers shall complete training before acting as an observer  
42 and complete additional training at least once every two years, as applicable. The State Board  
43 shall establish training standards and requirements for observers.

44           (c) The list of individuals appointed pursuant to this section shall be submitted  
45 electronically or in writing by noon on the business day before each observer is scheduled to  
46 serve. Individuals appointed to serve at a particular voting place or countywide shall be submitted  
47 to the director of the county board of elections for that county. Individuals appointed to serve  
48 statewide shall be submitted to the Executive Director of the State Board, who shall submit a  
49 copy to each affected county board of elections. Before each voting place opens for voting, the  
50 county board of elections shall provide a copy of the list of appointed observers for each voting

1 place to the chief judge for that respective voting place, including any countywide or statewide  
2 observers.

3 (d) The chief judge at each voting place may use reasonable methods to verify the identity  
4 of individuals appearing at the voting place to serve as an observer. The State Board ~~may~~ shall  
5 require an observer to wear an identification tag or badge to make voters and election officials  
6 aware of the observer's role in the voting place. The tag or badge shall include the observer's  
7 name, role, and partisan affiliation.

8 (e) No more than three observers from the same political party shall be in the voting  
9 enclosure at any time. Observers appointed to serve at a particular voting place may be relieved  
10 during the day after serving no less than four hours. Observers appointed to serve countywide or  
11 statewide may be relieved anytime throughout the day. Observers shall not appear on the ballot  
12 as a candidate or serve as an election official in the primary or election in which the observer is  
13 serving as an observer. ~~Observers shall take no oath of office.~~

14 (f) The county board of elections or a chief judge of a voting place shall only challenge  
15 the appointment of an observer pursuant to this section for good cause, which shall include  
16 evidence that the observer could impact the conduct of the election.

17 (g) Election officials shall not prohibit an observer from doing any of the following,  
18 provided that the observer does not interfere with the privacy of any voter or the conduct of the  
19 election:

- 20 (1) Taking notes in the voting place, including using an electronic device to take  
21 notes.
- 22 (2) Listening to conversations between a voter and election official that take place  
23 in the voting place, provided the conversation is related to election  
24 administration.
- 25 (3) Moving about the voting place, including the designated area for curbside  
26 voting.
- 27 (4) Leaving and reentering the voting enclosure.
- 28 (5) Communicating via phone outside of the voting enclosure.
- 29 (6) Witnessing any opening and closing procedures at the voting place.

30 (h) Observers shall sign a sworn oath that the observer shall not do any of the following  
31 inside the voting place:

- 32 (1) Look at, photograph, videotape, or otherwise record the image of any voter's  
33 marked ballot.
- 34 (2) Impede the ingress or egress of any voter into the voting place.
- 35 (3) Inhibit or interfere with any election official in the performance of his or her  
36 duties, including interfering with the transport of sealed ballot boxes, election  
37 equipment, or election results to the county board of elections.
- 38 (4) Engage in electioneering.
- 39 (5) Make or receive phone calls while in the voting place.

40 (i) An observer may take photographs inside the voting place before the voting begins  
41 and after voting has concluded, provided that the taking of photographs does not impair any  
42 election official in executing opening and closing procedures or compromise the security of  
43 ballots, election equipment, or election results. The State Board shall adopt rules to implement  
44 this subsection.

45 (j) A chief judge may remove an observer who engages in prohibited behavior under this  
46 section. A chief judge may also remove an observer for good cause, which shall include evidence  
47 that the observer could impact the conduct of the election. Whenever possible, the chief judge  
48 shall first issue a verbal or written warning to the observer. The warning must include the time  
49 and nature of the offense, and the chief judge must provide the observer a reasonable opportunity  
50 to correct the behavior. If the chief judge determines the observer should be removed, the chief  
51 judge must immediately notify the director of the county board of elections. The director of the

1 county board of elections must immediately notify the appointing authority so that a replacement  
2 observer can be appointed. Nothing in this section prohibits a chief judge from reporting an  
3 alleged violation of State or federal law to the appropriate authority.

4 (k) The State Board shall develop a uniform process for all county boards of elections  
5 and the State Board to implement for all of the following:

6 (1) The filing and hearing of challenges of the appointment of an observer  
7 pursuant to subsection (f) of this section.

8 (2) The hearing of appeals on challenges of the appointment of an observer.

9 (3) The hearing of appeals on the removal of an observer from the voting place  
10 pursuant to subsection (j) of this section.

11 (l) An observer may obtain copies of the list of persons who have voted at each voting  
12 place during the times the voting place is open for voting. Counties using an "authorization to  
13 vote document" instead of pollbooks to indicate which persons have voted are in compliance  
14 with this requirement if they allow observers to inspect election records so that the observer can  
15 create a list of who has voted at each voting place. The State Board shall determine the times at  
16 which these lists may be obtained. However, observers must be able to obtain copies of the list  
17 at least three times each day with at least one hour between obtaining the copies."

18 **SECTION 5.2.** During the conduct of elections, the State Board of Elections, in  
19 collaboration with county boards of elections, shall do each of the following:

20 (1) Ensure election administrators are adequately compensated equitably  
21 throughout the State to reduce attrition and loss of institutional knowledge.

22 (2) Ensure clear and conspicuous notices are placed at voting locations  
23 establishing clear rights and responsibilities for voters, poll workers, and  
24 observers.

25 (3) Develop a statewide, uniform system of reporting incidents of voter  
26 intimidation anonymously.

## 27 28 **PART VI. PROTECTING ELECTION OFFICIALS' PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE** 29 **INFORMATION IN PUBLIC RECORDS**

30 **SECTION 6.1.** G.S. 132-1.2 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

31 "(11) Reveals the personally identifiable information of precinct election officials  
32 and the immediate family members of precinct election officials protected  
33 under G.S. 163-49."

34 **SECTION 6.2.** Article 5 of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by  
35 adding a new section to read:

36 "**§ 163-49. Protecting precinct election officials' personally identifiable information in**  
37 **public records.**

38 (a) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, a precinct official may file  
39 written notice with the State Board requesting that the precinct official and the precinct official's  
40 immediate family, if applicable, be placed on a list prohibiting disclosure of personally  
41 identifiable information in public records when the precinct official deems the official or the  
42 official's immediate family is at risk of intimidation, threat, or coercion in response to official  
43 election duties. For purposes of this section, "personally identifiable information" means any of  
44 the following:

45 (1) A person's home address, home telephone number, personal mobile telephone  
46 number, pager number, or personal email address.

47 (2) A photograph of a person.

48 (3) Directions to a person's home.

49 (4) A photograph or description of a person's home, vehicle, or vehicle license  
50 plate.

1        (b) The State Board shall develop a process and establish criteria for precinct officials  
2 requesting nondisclosure of their personally identifiable information pursuant to this section. In  
3 developing the process, the State Board shall provide a means to notify the appropriate county  
4 boards of elections and other entities of the request."

## 6 **PART VII. ALLOW JUDICIAL REVIEW IN CERTAIN CONTESTED RACES**

7        **SECTION 7.1.** G.S. 163-182.13A(k) reads as rewritten:

8        "(k) General Assembly Determination Not Reviewable. – ~~The Notwithstanding subsection~~  
9 (j) of this section, the decision of the General Assembly in determining the contest of the election  
10 pursuant to this section may not be reviewed by the General Court of Justice. If judicial review  
11 is granted pursuant to this subsection, the court shall issue findings of fact in making its  
12 determination regarding whether the contestee is eligible and qualified or, if the contest is as to  
13 the conduct or results of the election, which candidate received the highest number of votes."

## 15 **PART VIII. SECURITY TRAINING FUNDS**

16        **SECTION 8.1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the State Auditor,  
17 pursuant to Section 3A.2 of S.L. 2024-57, for the State Board of Elections the sum of two hundred  
18 fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) in recurring funds for each year of the 2025-2027 fiscal  
19 biennium to provide biennial security training for election officials and their immediate family  
20 members, as defined in G.S. 14-43.17. Security training shall include, at a minimum, each of the  
21 following:

- 22        (1) Best practices for using social media and other forms of online engagement  
23        and maintaining online privacy.
- 24        (2) Home security program and maintenance.
- 25        (3) Understanding removal programs and requirements for election officials'  
26        personally identifiable information in accordance with Part VI of this act.
- 27        (4) Any other security training deemed relevant.

## 29 **PART IX. NEW THREAT MANAGEMENT CAPABILITY FUNDS**

30        **SECTION 9.1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the State Auditor,  
31 pursuant to Section 3A.2 of S.L. 2024-57, for the State Board of Elections the sum of two million  
32 dollars (\$2,000,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to establish, in  
33 coordination with the Department of Public Safety, as appropriate, a new threat management  
34 capability for monitoring all-source information that shall do the following:

- 35        (1) Provide a threat monitoring and analysis capability for the protection of  
36        election officials and their immediate family members, as applicable.
- 37        (2) Coordinate social media monitoring and threat assessments.
- 38        (3) Proactively manage the monitoring of websites for election officials'  
39        personally identifiable information and report violations to the appropriate  
40        law enforcement authorities.
- 41        (4) Maintain files of escalating behaviors and work in conjunction with the  
42        appropriate law enforcement to counteract overt acts of aggression.
- 43        (5) Maintain a database of each election official to catalogue complaints,  
44        including the name and other relevant personal information of the individual  
45        or group of individuals engaging in direct or indirect threatening behavior.
- 46        (6) Coordinate complaints by election officials of all sources and other online  
47        threats, whether direct or indirect, with law enforcement partners.

## 49 **PART X. SEVERABILITY**

50        **SECTION 10.1.** If any provision of this act or its application is held invalid, the  
51        invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this act that can be given effect



1 without the invalid provisions or application and, to this end, the provisions of this act are  
2 severable.

3

4 **PART XI. EFFECTIVE DATE**

5 **SECTION 11.1.** Parts VIII and IX of this act become effective July 1, 2025. Except  
6 as otherwise provided, the remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law and applies to  
7 elections held on or after that date.