

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 958
Committee Substitute Favorable 6/26/25
PROPOSED COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE H958-PCS30501-CMe-21

Short Title: Election Law Changes.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 14, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO MAKE VARIOUS CHANGES REGARDING ELECTION LAWS.
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. REVISIONS TO BALLOT COUNTING PROCEDURE

SECTION 1.1.(a) G.S. 163-182.2(a)(4) is recodified as G.S. 163-182.2(a2).

SECTION 1.1.(b) G.S. 163-182.2(a)(6) is recodified as G.S. 163-182.2(a3).

SECTION 1.1.(c) G.S. 163-182.2, as amended by this section, reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-182.2. Initial counting of official ballots.

(a) The initial counting of official ballots cast ~~at the precinct~~ on election day ~~and under Part 5 of Article 14A of this Chapter~~ shall be conducted according to the following principles:

(1) ~~Vote counting of ballots cast at the precinct on election day shall occur immediately after the polls close and shall be continuous until completed. If ballots cast under Part 5 of Article 14A of this Chapter are counted electronically, that count shall commence at the time the polls close. If ballots cast under Part 5 of Article 14A of this Chapter are paper ballots counted manually, that count shall commence at the same time as mail-in absentee ballots cast under Article 20 or Article 21A of this Chapter are counted.~~

(2) ~~Vote counting at the precinct shall be conducted with the participation of precinct officials of all political parties then present. Vote counting at the county board of elections shall be conducted in the presence or under the supervision of board members of all political parties then present.~~

(3) Any member of the public wishing to witness the vote count ~~at any level~~ shall be allowed to do so. No witness shall interfere with the orderly counting of the official ballots. Witnesses shall not participate in the ~~official~~ counting of official ballots.

(4) Recodified.

(5) Precinct officials shall provide a preliminary report of the vote counting ~~on election day~~ to the county board ~~of elections~~ as quickly as possible. The preliminary report shall be unofficial, has no binding effect upon the official county canvass to follow, and shall include the number of provisional ballots cast in that precinct.

(6) Recodified.

(a1) The initial counting of official ballots cast under Part 5 of Article 14A of this Chapter shall be conducted according to the following principles:



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- (1) Vote counting shall occur between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. on election day at the hour and place stated in a resolution adopted by the county board at least two weeks prior to the time the voting place opens in accordance with G.S. 163-166.25. The county board shall not reveal the result of the count prior to the close of polls on election day.
- (2) Vote counting shall be conducted in the presence or under the supervision of county board members of all political parties then present.
- (3) Any member of the public wishing to witness the vote count shall be allowed to do so. No witness shall interfere with the orderly counting of the official ballots. Witnesses shall not participate in the counting of official ballots.
- (4) County boards may review for approval any provisional official ballots and may take preparatory steps for the count of such ballots at a meeting held by the county board prior to election day, pursuant to a resolution adopted by the county board at least two weeks in advance of the meeting, as long as the preparatory steps do not reveal the result of the count prior to the close of polls on election day.

(a2) If the county board finds that an individual voting a provisional official ballot (i) was registered in the county as provided in 163-82.1, (ii) voted in the proper precinct under G.S. 163-55 and G.S. 163-57, and (iii) was otherwise eligible to vote, the provisional official ballots shall be counted by the county board no later than ~~5:00 P.M. on the third~~ fifth business day after the election. Except as provided in G.S. 163-82.15(e), if the county board finds that an individual voting a provisional official ballot (i) did not vote in the proper precinct under G.S. 163-55 and G.S. 163-57, (ii) is not registered in the county as provided in G.S. 163-82.1, or (iii) is otherwise not eligible to vote, the ballot shall not be counted. If a voter was properly registered to vote in the election by the county board, no mistake of an election official in giving the voter a ballot or in failing to comply with G.S. 163-82.15 or G.S. 163-166.11 shall serve to prevent the counting of the vote on any ballot item the voter was eligible by registration and qualified by residency to vote. When an individual has voted a provisional official ballot after completing an affidavit under G.S. 163-166.16(d), and the county board has determined that there are grounds to believe the affidavit is false within five business days after the election, the county board shall determine whether to count the provisional official ballot by the date of the county canvass.

(a3) In counties that use any certified mechanical or electronic voting system, subject to the sample counts under G.S. 163-182.1 and subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section, and of a hand-to-eye recount under G.S. 163-182.7 and G.S. 163-182.7A, a county board of elections shall rely in its canvass on the mechanical or electronic count of the vote rather than the full hand-to-eye count of the paper ballots or records. In the event of a material discrepancy between the electronic or mechanical count and a hand-to-eye count or recount, the hand-to-eye count or recount shall control, except where paper ballots or records have been lost or destroyed or where there is another reasonable basis to conclude that the hand-to-eye count is not the true count.

(a4) Any resolution required by this section shall be published once a week for two weeks prior to the election in a newspaper having general circulation in the county. Notice may additionally be made on a radio or television station or both, but the notice shall be in addition to the newspaper and other required notice.

(b) The State Board shall promulgate rules for the initial counting of all official ballots. All election officials shall be governed by those rules. In promulgating those rules, the State Board shall adhere to the following guidelines:

- (1) For each voting system used, the rules shall specify the role of precinct officials and of the county board ~~of elections~~ in the initial counting of official ballots.

- (2) For optical scan and direct record electronic voting systems, and for any other voting systems in which ballots are counted other than on paper by hand and eye, those rules shall provide for a sample hand-to-eye count of the paper ballots of a sampling of a statewide ballot item in every county. The presidential ballot item shall be the subject of the sampling in a presidential election. If there is no statewide ballot item, the State Board shall provide a process for selecting district or local ballot items to adequately sample the electorate. The State Board shall approve in an open meeting the procedure for random sampling for each election. The random sampling for any county shall be done publicly after the initial count of election returns for that county is publicly released or 24 hours after the polls close on election day, whichever is earlier. The sample chosen by the State Board shall be of one or more full precincts, full counts of mailed absentee ballots, and full counts of one or more early voting sites. The size of the sample of each category shall be chosen to produce a statistically significant result and shall be chosen after consultation with a statistician. The actual units shall be chosen at random. In the event of a material discrepancy between the electronic or mechanical count and a hand-to-eye count, the hand-to-eye count shall control, except where paper ballots have been lost or destroyed or where there is another reasonable basis to conclude that the hand-to-eye count is not the true count. If the discrepancy between the hand-to-eye count and the mechanical or electronic count is significant, a complete hand-to-eye count shall be conducted. The sample count need not be done on election night.
- (3) The rules shall provide for accurate unofficial reporting of the results from the precinct to the county board of elections with reasonable speed on the night of the election.
- (4) The rules shall provide for the prompt and secure transmission of official ballots from the voting place to the county ~~board of elections~~ board.
- (c) The State Board shall direct the county boards of elections in the application of the principles and rules in individual circumstances."

SECTION 1.2. G.S. 163-230.1(e1) reads as rewritten:

"(e1) Curable Deficiencies. – If a container-return envelope contains a curable deficiency, the county board shall promptly notify the voter of the deficiency and the manner in which the voter may cure the deficiency. Curable deficiencies are deficiencies that can be cured with supplemental documentation or attestation provided by the voter, including when any of the following occurs:

- (1) The voter did not sign the voter certification as required by G.S. 163-231(a)(4).
- (2) The voter signed the application in the wrong place on the application.
- (3) The voter failed to include with the container-return envelope a photocopy of identification described in G.S. 163-166.16(a) or an affidavit as described in G.S. 163-166.16(d)(1), (d)(2), or (d)(3), as required by subsection (f1) of this section.

The identification of the two persons witnessing the casting of the absentee ballot in accordance with G.S. 163-231(a) is not a curable deficiency. Any container-return envelope with a curable deficiency that is transmitted to the county board shall be considered timely if cure documentation is received no later than 12:00 P.M. on the ~~third~~ fifth business day after the election. Cure documentation may be transmitted via email to the county board if the deficiency is one described in subdivision (3) of this subsection. The notification of voters regarding curable deficiencies is an administrative task that may be performed by county board staff and is not required to be performed at an absentee meeting as provided for in subsection (f) of this section.

1 The voter shall be notified of curable deficiencies by mail, and by telephone or email if the
2 telephone number or email address was provided by the voter on the request form for absentee
3 ballots."

4 **SECTION 1.3.** G.S. 163-231 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

5 "(d) Counting of Executed Absentee Ballots. – Only those voted absentee ballots
6 transmitted to a county board in accordance with this section shall be counted."

7 **SECTION 1.4.** G.S. 163-234 reads as rewritten:

8 "**§ 163-234. Counting absentee ballots by county board.**

9 All absentee ballots returned to the county board in the container-return envelopes shall be
10 retained by the county board to be counted by the county board as follows:

11 ...

12 (2) The county board shall meet at ~~5:00 P.M.~~ 9:00 A.M. on election day in the
13 county board office or other public location in the county courthouse for the
14 purpose of counting all absentee ballots except those which have been
15 challenged before ~~5:00 P.M.~~ 9:00 A.M. on election day and those received
16 pursuant to G.S. 163-231(b)(2). Any elector of the county shall be permitted
17 to attend the meeting and allowed to observe the counting process, so long as
18 the elector does not in any manner interfere with the election officials in the
19 discharge of their duties. ~~The count of these absentee ballots shall be~~
20 ~~continuous until completed, and the members shall not separate or leave the~~
21 ~~counting place except for unavoidable necessity.~~

22 ~~The county board may begin counting absentee ballots issued under~~
23 ~~Article 21A of this Chapter between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.~~
24 ~~and may begin counting all absentee ballots between the hours of 2:00 P.M.~~
25 ~~and 5:00 P.M. upon the adoption of a resolution at least two weeks prior to the~~
26 ~~election in which the hour and place of counting absentee ballots shall be~~
27 ~~stated. A copy of the resolution shall be published once a week for two weeks~~
28 ~~prior to the election, in a newspaper having general circulation in the county.~~
29 ~~Notice may additionally be made on a radio or television station or both, but~~
30 ~~the notice shall be in addition to the newspaper and other required notice. The~~
31 ~~count shall be continuous until completed and the members shall not separate~~
32 ~~or leave the counting place except for unavoidable necessity. The county~~
33 ~~board shall not adjourn the meeting until the count of these absentee ballots is~~
34 ~~complete.~~ except that if the count has been completed prior to the time the
35 polls close, it shall be suspended until that time pending receipt of any
36 additional ballots. Nothing in this section prohibits a county board from taking
37 preparatory steps for the count earlier than the times specified in this section,
38 as long as the preparatory steps do not reveal to any individual not engaged in
39 the actual count election results before the times specified in this subdivision
40 for the count to begin. By way of illustration and not limitation, a preparatory
41 step for the count would be the entry of tally cards from direct record
42 electronic voting units into a computer for processing. The county board shall
43 not announce the result of the count ~~before 7:30 P.M.~~ prior to the close of polls
44 on election day.

45 ...

46 (11) ~~The county board shall meet after the day of the election and prior to the day~~
47 ~~of canvass to count absentee ballots received pursuant to G.S. 163-231(b)(2)~~
48 ~~upon the adoption of a resolution pursuant to subdivision (2) of this section.~~
49 ~~The county board shall comply with all other requirements of this section and~~
50 ~~G.S. 163-230.1 for the counting of these absentee ballots.~~

(12) No later than ~~5:00 P.M. on the third~~ fifth business day after the election, the county board shall announce the tally of all absentee ballots, except those subject to a challenge or those cast in accordance with Article 21A of this Chapter."

SECTION 1.5. G.S. 163-275 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(15) For any person to reveal the result of any count of ballots prior to the close of polls on election day in accordance with G.S. 163-182.2 or G.S. 163-234."

SECTION 1.6. Section 1.5 of this Part becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date. The remainder of this Part becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

PART II. VARIOUS ELECTION ADMINISTRATION CHANGES

PARTY DESIGNATIONS ON BALLOT

SECTION 2.1.(a) G.S. 163-165.5(a)(4) reads as rewritten:

"(4) Party designations in partisan ballot items. Party designations shall be printed in the same font type and size as the name of the candidate."

SECTION 2.1.(b) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

REMOVAL AND TRAINING OF PRECINCT OFFICIALS

SECTION 2.2.(a) Article 5 of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 163-41.3. Removal of precinct officials; vacancies."

SECTION 2.2.(b) G.S. 163-41(d) is recodified as G.S. 163-41.3.

SECTION 2.2.(c) G.S. 163-41, as amended by this section, reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-41. Precinct chief judges and judges of election; appointment; terms of office; qualifications; ~~vacancies~~; oaths of office.

(a) Appointment of Chief Judge and Judges. – At the meeting required by G.S. 163-31 to be held on the Tuesday following the third Monday in August of the year in which they are appointed, the county board ~~of elections~~ shall appoint one person to act as chief judge and two other persons to act as judges of election for each precinct in the county. Their terms of office shall continue for two years from the specified date of appointment and until their successors are appointed and qualified, except that if a nonresident of the precinct is appointed as chief judge or judge for a precinct, that person's term of office shall end if the county board ~~of elections~~ appoints a qualified resident of the precinct of the same party to replace the nonresident chief judge or judge. It shall be ~~their~~ the duty of the precinct officials to conduct the primaries and elections within their respective precincts. Persons appointed to these offices must be registered voters and residents of the county in which the precinct is located, of good repute, and able to read and write. Not more than one judge in each precinct shall belong to the same political party as the chief judge.

(b) ~~The~~ As used in this Article, the term "precinct official" shall mean chief judges and judges appointed pursuant to this section, and all assistants appointed pursuant to G.S. 163-42, unless the context of a statute clearly indicates a more restrictive meaning.

(b1) No person shall be eligible to serve as a precinct official, ~~as that term is defined above, who holds~~ official if any of the following apply:

(1) The person holds any elective office under the government of the United States, or of the State of North Carolina or any political subdivision thereof.

(2) ~~No person shall be eligible to serve as a precinct official who is~~ The person is a candidate for nomination or election.

(3) ~~No person shall be eligible to serve as a precinct official who holds~~ The person holds any office in a state, congressional district, county, or precinct political party or political organization, or who is a manager or treasurer for any candidate or political party, provided however that the position of delegate to a political party convention shall not be considered an office for the purpose of this subsection-subdivision.

(4) The person has been prohibited from serving as a precinct official in any subsequent election in accordance with G.S. 163-41.3(a).

...."

SECTION 2.2.(d) G.S. 163-41.3, as enacted by this section, reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-41.3. Removal of precinct officials; vacancies.

(a) Any precinct official may be removed from office, including on the day of the election or primary, for incompetency or failure to discharge the duties of office by the county board in accordance with G.S. 163-33. The county board may prohibit a precinct official who has been removed from office from serving as a precinct official in any subsequent election.

(b)

...."

SECTION 2.2.(e) G.S. 163-33(2) reads as rewritten:

"(2) To appoint all chief judges, judges, assistants, and other officers of elections, and designate the precinct in which each shall serve; and, after notice and hearing, to remove any chief judge, judge of elections, assistant, or other officer of election appointed by it for incompetency, failure to discharge the duties of office, failure to qualify within the time prescribed by law, fraud, or for any other satisfactory ~~cause.~~ cause, as provided in G.S. 163-41.3. In exercising the powers and duties of this subdivision, the board may act only when a majority of its members are present at any meeting at which such powers or duties are exercised."

SECTION 2.2.(f) G.S. 163-42(c) reads as rewritten:

"(c) In addition, a county board ~~of elections~~ by unanimous vote of all of its members may appoint any registered voter in the county as an emergency election-day assistant, as long as that voter is otherwise qualified to be a precinct official. The State Board ~~of Elections~~ shall determine for each election the number of emergency election-day assistants each county may have, based on population, expected turnout, and complexity of election ~~duties.~~ duties; however, each county must have, at a minimum, six emergency election-day assistants. The county board by unanimous vote of all of its members may assign emergency election-day assistants on the day of the election to any precinct in the county where the number of precinct officials is insufficient because of an ~~emergency occurring within 48 hours of the opening of the polls~~ emergency, the removal of a precinct official, or any other reason that prevents an appointed a precinct official from serving. serving throughout the day of the primary or election. A person appointed to serve as an emergency election-day assistant shall be trained and paid like other precinct assistants in accordance with G.S. 163-46. A county board ~~of elections~~ shall apportion the appointments ~~as of~~ emergency election-day assistant-assistants among registrants of each political party so as to make possible the staffing of each precinct with officials of more than one party, and the county board shall make assignments so that no precinct has precinct ~~officials~~ assistants all of whom are registered with the same party."

SECTION 2.2.(g) G.S. 163-82.24(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Training. – The State Board ~~of Elections~~ shall conduct training programs in election law and procedures. Every county elections director shall receive training conducted by the State Board at least as often as required in the following schedule:

(1) Once during each odd-numbered year before the municipal election held in the ~~county;~~ county.

- (2) Once during each even-numbered year before the first partisan ~~primary~~ and primary.
- (3) Once during each even-numbered year after the partisan primaries but before the general election.

(a1) Every member of a county board ~~of elections~~ shall receive training conducted by the State Board at least once during the six months after the member's initial appointment and at least once again during the first two years of the member's service. The State Board ~~of Elections~~ shall promulgate rules for the training of precinct officials, which shall be followed by the county ~~boards of elections~~ boards. At a minimum, the training for all precinct officials shall include information regarding all of the following:

- (1) The duties of the office of precinct official.
- (2) How to confirm whether a person presenting to vote is registered in that county.
- (3) How to issue ballots.
- (4) How to properly provide voter assistance, including how to provide assistance to those curbside voting.
- (5) The procedure for opening and closing of polls.
- (6) The prohibition regarding election-related activity in the voting place and buffer zone of the voting place.
- (7) The potential for removal from office for failure to comply with the provisions of this Chapter."

SECTION 2.2.(h) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

COUNTING OF CHALLENGED BALLOT OF DECEASED VOTER

SECTION 2.3.(a) G.S. 163-90.2(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) When any challenge is sustained for any cause listed under G.S. 163-85(c), the county board shall cancel or correct the voter registration of the voter. The county board shall maintain such record for at least six months and during the pendency of any appeal. The Except as provided in this subsection, the challenged ballot shall be counted for any ballot items for which the challenged voter is eligible to vote, as if it were a provisional official ballot under the provisions of G.S. 163-166.11(4). For any challenge sustained for death of the voter under G.S. 163-85(c)(6), the challenged ballot shall not be counted if the voter died between the time the challenged ballot was cast and 6:30 A.M. on election day."

SECTION 2.3.(b) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT VOTING PLACE

SECTION 2.4.(a) G.S. 14-132 reads as rewritten:

"§ 14-132. Disorderly conduct in and injuries to public buildings and facilities.

- (a) It is a misdemeanor ~~if for~~ any person ~~shall to do any of the following:~~
- (1) Make any rude or riotous noise, or ~~be guilty of engage in~~ any disorderly conduct, in or near any public building or ~~facility; or facility.~~
 - (2) Unlawfully write or scribble on, mark, deface, besmear, or injure the walls of any public building or facility, or any statue or monument situated in any public ~~place; or place.~~
 - (3) Commit any nuisance in or near any public building or facility.
- (b) Any person in charge of any public building or facility ~~owned or controlled by the State, any subdivision of the State, or any other public agency~~ shall have authority to arrest summarily and without warrant for a violation of this section.

(c) The term "public building or facility" as used in this section includes any building or facility together with the surrounding grounds and premises used in connection with the operation or functioning of such public building or facility which is any of the following:

- (1) One to which the public or a portion of the public has access and is owned or controlled by the State, any subdivision of the State, any other public agency, or any private institution or agency of a charitable, educational, or ~~eleemosynary nature; or~~ philanthropic nature.
- (2) Dedicated to the use of the general public for a purpose which is primarily concerned with public recreation, cultural activities, and other events of a public nature or character.
- (3) Designated by the Director of the State Bureau of Investigation in accordance with G.S. 143B-987.
- (4) One temporarily in use as a voting place under Chapter 163 of the General Statutes during the hours for voting.

~~The term "building or facility" as used in this section also includes the surrounding grounds and premises of any building or facility used in connection with the operation or functioning of such building or facility.~~

(d) Unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, any person who violates any provision of this section is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor."

SECTION 2.4.(b) G.S. 163-166.4(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) Area for Election-Related Activity. – Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, the county board ~~of elections~~ shall also provide an area adjacent to the buffer zone for each voting place in which persons or groups of persons may distribute campaign literature, place political advertising, solicit votes, or otherwise engage in election-related activity. It shall be a Class 3 misdemeanor for a person to steal, deface, vandalize, or unlawfully remove political advertising that is lawfully placed under this subsection."

SECTION 2.4.(c) This section becomes effective October 1, 2025, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.

BAN RANK CHOICE VOTING

SECTION 2.5.(a) Article 14A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 163-165.6A. Rank choice voting prohibited.

No rank choice voting may be used in any primary or election. The term "rank choice voting" refers to a method that allows a voter the option to rank candidates for office in the voter's order of preference."

SECTION 2.5.(b) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

TIME LINE FOR COUNTY BOARD TO SEND ADDRESS VERIFICATIONS

SECTION 2.6.(a) G.S. 163-82.7 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-82.7. Verification of qualifications and address of applicant; denial or approval of application.

...

(c) Verification of Address by Mail. – If the county board ~~of elections~~ tentatively determines that the applicant is qualified to vote at the address given, then the county board shall send a notice within five business days of receipt of the registration application to the applicant, by nonforwardable mail, at the address the applicant provides on the application form. The notice shall state that the county will register the applicant to vote if the Postal Service does not return

the notice as undeliverable to the county board. The notice shall also inform the applicant of the precinct and voting place to which the applicant will be assigned if registered.

...

(e) Second Notice if First Notice Is Returned as Undeliverable. – If the Postal Service returns the notice as undeliverable, the county board shall send a second notice within five business days of the receipt of the notice as undeliverable from the Postal Service by nonforwardable mail to the same address to which the first notice was sent. If the second notice is not returned as undeliverable, the county board shall register the applicant to vote.

...."

SECTION 2.6.(b) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to notices sent on or after that date.

REQUIRE RETURN TO SENDER ON VOTER REGISTRATION MAILINGS

SECTION 2.7.(a) G.S. 163-82.7 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(h) Return to Sender Requirement on Notices. – All notices sent to applicants pursuant to this section shall include a pre-printed space on the notice which can be marked to indicate that the applicant does not reside at the address given by the applicant and that the notice should be returned to the appropriate sender."

SECTION 2.7.(b) G.S. 163-82.14(d)(2) is amended by adding a new sub-subdivision to read:

"d. Contains a pre-printed space which can be marked to indicate that the registrant does not reside at the address given by the registrant and that the mailing should be returned to the appropriate sender."

SECTION 2.7.(c) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to notices sent on or after that date.

CLOSING OF EQUIPMENT FOLLOWING EARLY VOTING

SECTION 2.8.(a) G.S. 163-166.40 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(j) At the conclusion of the early voting period provided for in subsection (b) of this section, all materials and voting equipment containing tallies of ballots or individual counts of ballots cast during the early voting period, including any digital recordation of such, shall be kept in a secure, locked location by the county board until the initial counting of early voting ballots in accordance with G.S. 163-182.2(a1)."

SECTION 2.8.(b) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

LIST-MAINTENANCE DATA SHARING AGREEMENTS

SECTION 2.9.(a) G.S. 163-82.14(a1) reads as rewritten:

"(a1) Methods of List Maintenance; Cross State Checks. – List maintenance efforts under this section shall be nondiscriminatory and shall comply with the provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, and with the provisions of the National Voter Registration Act. The State Board, in addition to the methods set forth in this section, may use other methods toward the ends set forth in subsection (a) of this section, including address-updating services provided by the Postal Service and entering into data sharing agreements with other states to cross-check information on voter registration and voting records. Any data sharing agreement shall require the other state or states to comply with G.S. 163-82.10 and G.S. 163-82.10B. Any voter registration data received from other states pursuant to a data sharing agreement with that state is not a public record."

SECTION 2.9.(b) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026.

PROHIBIT PAYMENT PER SIGNATURE FOR PETITIONS

SECTION 2.10.(a) G.S. 163-221 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-221. ~~Persons may not sign name of another to petition.~~ **Prohibited petition activities.**

(a) No person may sign the name of another person to any of the following:

(1) Any petition calling for an election or referendum.

(2) Any petition under G.S. 163-96 for the formulation of a new political party.

(3) Any petition under G.S. 163-107.1 requesting a person to be a candidate.

(4) Any petition under G.S. 163-122 to have the name of an unaffiliated candidate placed on the general election ballot, or under G.S. 163-296 to have the name of an unaffiliated or nonpartisan candidate placed on the regular municipal election ballot.

(5) Any petition under G.S. 163-213.5 to place a name on the ballot under the Presidential Preference Primary Act.

(6) Any petition under G.S. 163-123 to qualify as a write-in candidate.

(b) Any name signed on a petition, in violation of this section, shall be void.

(b1) No person may be compensated based on the number of signatures collected for a petition.

(c) Any person who willfully violates this section is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor."

SECTION 2.10.(b) This section becomes effective December 1, 2025, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.

ALLOW COUNTY BOARD TO INITIATE VOTER CHALLENGES FOR EARLY VOTING AND ABSENTEE BALLOTS

SECTION 2.11.(a) Article 8 of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 163-90.4. Audit and challenge of ineligible votes cast.

(a) After each primary or election, the State Board shall conduct a uniform statewide audit to identify any ballots cast under Part 5 of Article 14A of this Chapter and ballots cast under Article 20 of this Chapter that are ineligible to be counted in that primary or election for one of the reasons identified in G.S. 163-87, as evidenced by official government database records. The State Board shall distribute the results of this audit to the county boards no later than 5:00 P.M. on the fourth business day before canvass.

(b) No later than 5:00 P.M. on the third business day before canvass, each county board shall review the results of the audit conducted by the State Board under subsection (a) of this section, analyze the records of voters identified in the audit from the respective county, and, if determined by the county board that any vote cast was ineligible to be counted, the chair of the county board shall serve a challenge on the voter casting that ballot. The county board shall conduct the challenge proceedings under the applicable provisions of G.S. 163-89. The county board's staff shall present evidence in support of the challenge and shall bear the burden of proof.

(c) For purposes of this Article, the chair of the county board shall be deemed to be a registered voter of the same county as the challenged voter."

SECTION 2.11.(b) G.S. 163-89 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-89. Procedures for challenging ballots cast during early voting and absentee ballots.

(a) Time for Challenge. – The absentee ballot of any voter Ballots cast under Part 5 of Article 14A of this Chapter and ballots cast under Article 20 and Article 21A of this Chapter that are received by the county board of elections pursuant to G.S. 163-231(b)(1) may be challenged no later than 5:00 P.M. on the fifth business day after the primary or general election or county bond election. The absentee ballot of any voter Ballots cast under Article 20 and Article 21A of this Chapter that are received by the county board of elections pursuant to G.S. 163-231(b)(2) may be challenged no later than 5:00 P.M. on the next business day following the deadline for receipt of such absentee ballots.

(b) Who May Challenge. – Any registered voter of the same county as the ~~absentee~~ challenged voter may challenge that voter's ~~absentee~~ ballot.

(c) Form and Nature of Challenge. – Each challenged ~~absentee~~ ballot shall be challenged separately. The burden of proof shall be on the challenger. Each challenge shall be made in writing and, if ~~they are~~ available, shall be made on forms prescribed by the State ~~Board of Elections~~ Board. Each challenge shall specify the reasons why the ballot does not comply with the provisions of this ~~Article~~ Chapter or why the ~~absentee-challenged~~ voter is not legally entitled to vote in the particular primary or election. The challenge shall be signed by the challenger.

(d) To Whom Challenge Addressed; to Whom Challenge Delivered. – Each challenge shall be addressed to the county ~~board of elections~~ board. It may be filed with the county board at its offices or with the chief judge of the precinct in which the ~~challenger and absentee~~ challenged voter ~~are~~ is registered. If it is delivered to the chief judge, the chief judge shall personally deliver the challenge to the ~~chairman~~ chair of the county ~~board of elections~~ on the day of the county canvass board.

(e) Hearing Procedure. – All challenges filed under this section shall be heard by the county board ~~of elections~~ on the day set for the canvass of the returns. All members of the county board shall attend the canvass and all members shall be present for the hearing of challenges to ~~absentee-challenged~~ ballots. The hearing of challenges shall be audio and video recorded.

~~Before the board hears a challenge to an absentee ballot, the chairman shall mark the word "challenged" after the voter's name in the register of absentee ballot applications and ballots issued and in the pollbook of absentee voters.~~

~~The county board then shall hear the challenger's reasons for the challenge, and it challenge. For challenges to ballots cast under Article 20 of this Chapter, the county board shall make its decision without opening the container-return envelope or removing the ballots from it.~~

The county board shall have authority to administer the necessary oaths or affirmations to all witnesses brought before it to testify to the qualifications of the voter challenged or to the validity or invalidity of the ballot.

If the challenge is sustained, ~~the chairman shall mark the word "sustained" after the word "challenged" following the voter's name in the register of absentee ballot applications and ballots issued and in the pollbook of absentee voters; the voter's ballots shall not be counted; and the container-return envelope shall not be opened but shall be marked "Challenge Sustained." All envelopes so marked shall be preserved intact by the chairman for a period of six months from canvass day or longer if any contest then is pending concerning the validity of any absentee ballot; then the challenged ballot shall be counted for any ballot items for which the challenged voter is eligible to vote, as if it were a provisional official ballot under the provisions of G.S. 163-166.11(4).~~

If the challenge is overruled, the ~~absentee~~ ballots shall be ~~removed from the container-return envelopes and counted by the board of elections, county board, and the county board shall adjust the appropriate abstracts of returns to show that the ballots have been counted and tallied in the manner provided for unchallenged absentee ballots tallied.~~

If the challenge was delivered to the county board by the chief judge of the precinct and was sustained, the county board shall reopen the appropriate ballot boxes, remove such ballots, determine how those ballots were voted, deduct such ballots from the returns, and adjust the appropriate abstracts of returns.

Any voter whose ballots have been challenged may, either personally or through an authorized representative, appear before the county board at the hearing on the challenge and present evidence as to the validity of the ballot.

(f) Notations on Absentee Ballots. – For ballots cast under Article 20 of this Chapter, the following shall occur during and after the hearing process:

- (1) Before the county board hears the challenge, the chair shall mark the word "challenged" after the voter's name in the register of absentee ballot applications and ballots issued and in the pollbook of absentee voters.
- (2) If the challenge is sustained, the chair shall mark the word "sustained" after the word "challenged" following the voter's name in the register of absentee ballot applications and ballots issued and in the pollbook of absentee voters, and the container return envelope shall not be opened but shall be marked "Challenge Sustained." All envelopes so marked shall be preserved intact by the chair for a period of six months from canvass day or longer if any contest then is pending concerning the validity of any challenged ballot."

SECTION 2.11.(c) G.S. 163-90.2 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-90.2. Action when challenge sustained, overruled, or dismissed.

(a) When any challenge is sustained for any cause listed under G.S. 163-85(c), the county board shall cancel or correct the voter registration of the voter. The county board shall maintain such record for at least six months and during the pendency of any appeal. ~~The challenged ballot shall be counted for any ballot items for which the challenged voter is eligible to vote, as if it were a provisional official ballot under the provisions of G.S. 163-166.11(4).~~

(b) When any challenge made under G.S. 163-85 is overruled or dismissed, the county board shall erase the word "challenged" which appears on the person's registration records.

(c) A decision by a county board of elections on any challenge made under the provisions of this Article shall be appealable to the Superior Court of the county in which the offices of that county board are located within 10 days. If the appeal is made by the State Board, that appeal shall be to the Superior Court of the county in which the challenge originated. Only those persons against whom a challenge is ~~sustained or sustained~~, persons who have made a challenge which is ~~overruled~~ overruled, or a county board that initiated a challenge shall have standing to file such appeal."

SECTION 2.11.(d) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to challenges filed on or after that date.

APPLY TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE EXPIRATION OF CERTAIN CLASS C DRIVERS LICENSES TO PHOTO IDENTIFICATION PRESENTED FOR VOTING

SECTION 2.12.(a) During the time period that a Class C drivers license expiration date is extended in accordance with Section 18 of S.L. 2025-47, that Class C drivers license shall be deemed valid and unexpired for the purposes of G.S. 163-166.16.

SECTION 2.12.(b) This section is effective when it becomes law and shall expire December 31, 2027.

REQUIRE APPLICANTS TO PROVIDE FULL SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER ON VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

SECTION 2.13.(a) G.S. 163-82.4 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-82.4. Contents of application form.

(a) Information Requested of Applicant. – The form required by G.S. 163-82.3(a) shall request ~~the applicant's~~ all of the following from the applicant:

- (1) ~~Name~~, Name.
- (2) ~~Date of birth~~, birth.
- (3) ~~Residence address~~, address.
- (4) ~~County of residence~~, residence.
- (5) ~~Date of application~~, application.
- (6) ~~Gender~~, Gender.
- (7) ~~Race~~, Race.
- (8) ~~Ethnicity~~, Ethnicity.

- (9) Political party affiliation, if any, in accordance with subsection (d) of this ~~section,section.~~
- (10) Telephone number (to assist the county board of elections in contacting the voter if needed in processing the ~~application~~),application).
- (11) Drivers license ~~number or, number,~~ if the applicant ~~does not have~~ has a drivers license ~~number, the last four digits of the applicant's social security number,number.~~
- (12) ~~and any~~ Any other information the State Board finds is necessary to enable officials of the county where the person resides to satisfactorily process the application.

~~The~~ In addition, the form shall require the applicant to provide the applicant's full social security number and require the applicant to state whether the applicant is currently registered to vote anywhere, and at what address, so that any prior registration can be cancelled. The portions of the form concerning race and ethnicity shall include as a choice any category shown by the most recent decennial federal census to compose at least one percent (1%) of the total population of North Carolina. The county board shall make a diligent effort to complete for the registration records any information requested on the form that the applicant does not complete, but no application shall be denied because an applicant does not state race, ethnicity, gender, or telephone number. The application shall conspicuously state that provision of the applicant's telephone number is optional. If the county board maintains voter records on computer, the free list provided under this subsection shall include telephone numbers if the county board enters the telephone number into its computer records of voters.

(b) No Drivers License or Social Security Number Issued. – The State Board shall assign a unique identifier number to an applicant for voter registration if the applicant has not been issued ~~either a current and valid drivers license or a social security~~ number. That unique identifier number shall serve to identify that applicant for voter registration purposes.

...."

SECTION 2.13.(b) The State Board of Elections shall update voter registration forms required by G.S. 163-82.3(a) to require the applicant to provide his or her full social security number, as required by this section, no later than July 1, 2026. The State Board of Elections and county boards of elections shall continue to accept a voter registration application form that lacks a full social security number until December 31, 2026. As of January 1, 2027, the State Board of Elections and county boards of elections shall only accept voter registration application forms containing a voter's full nine-digit social security number.

REQUIRE DMV TO FURNISH FULL SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS FOR DMV CUSTOMERS TO THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

SECTION 2.14. Notwithstanding G.S. 20-7, no later than January 1, 2026, the Department of Transportation shall cooperate with the State Board of Elections to provide to the State Board of Elections the full nine-digit social security number of any registered voter in this State for which the Division of Motor Vehicles has a record of such information.

INCREASE COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS OF COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

SECTION 2.15.(a) G.S. 163-32 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-32. Compensation of members of ~~county boards of elections~~ county boards.

In full compensation of their services, members of the county board ~~of elections~~ (including the ~~chairman~~ chair) shall be paid by the county ~~twenty-five dollars (\$25.00)~~ one hundred dollars (\$100.00) per meeting for the time they are actually engaged in the discharge of their duties, together with reimbursement of expenditures necessary and incidental to the discharge of their duties; provided that members are not entitled to be compensated for more than one meeting held in any one 24-hour period. In its discretion, the board of county commissioners of any county

may pay the ~~chairman-chair~~ and members of the county board of elections compensation in addition to the per meeting and expense allowance provided in this paragraph.

In all counties the ~~county board of elections~~ shall pay its clerk, assistant clerks, and other employees such compensation as it shall fix within budget appropriations. Counties which adopt full-time and permanent registration shall have authority to pay directors of elections whatever compensation they may fix within budget appropriations."

SECTION 2.15.(b) This section becomes effective July 1, 2027.

PART III. DUTY & STRUCTURE OF THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

AUTHORITY IN ELECTION LITIGATION

SECTION 3.1.(a) G.S. 163-25 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-25. Authority of State Board to assist in litigation.

(a) The State Board shall possess authority to assist any county board of elections in any matter in which litigation is contemplated or has been initiated, provided, the in accordance with all of the following:

(1) The county board of elections in such county petitions, requests, by majority resolution, for such assistance from the State Board and, provided further, that the Board.

(2) The State Board determines, in its sole discretion by majority vote, to assist in any such the matter.

(3) It is further stipulated that the The State Board shall does not be authorized under this provision to enter into any litigation in assistance to counties, any county board or county boards except in those instances where the uniform administration of this Chapter has been, or would be threatened.

(b) ~~The Attorney General shall provide the State Board with legal assistance in execution of its authority under this section or, in the Attorney General's discretion, recommend that may employ staff counsel or retain private counsel be employed to provide legal services. Private counsel may be retained for any of the following matters:~~

(1) Any matter in which litigation is contemplated or has been initiated.

(2) Any matter in which the State Board is assisting in litigation in accordance with subsection (a) of this section.

(3) Any matter arising in connection with the State Board's actions under this Chapter.

(4) Any matter arising in connection with the Executive Director's actions under this Chapter.

(c) ~~If the Attorney General recommends employment State Board determines retention of private counsel, counsel is necessary, the State Board may employ counsel with the approval of the General Assembly use funds available to the State Board to retain private counsel under this section. The State Board shall supervise and manage counsel retained under this section.~~

(d) G.S. 114-2.3 and G.S. 147-17 shall not apply to counsel employed or retained under this section.

(e) All communications or documents made or used in connection with the provision of legal services by counsel employed or retained under this section are not "public records" as defined by G.S. 132-1 and shall not be open to public inspection, examination, or copying."

SECTION 3.1.(b) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to counsel employed on, retained on, or hired or retained after that date.

DESIGNATION OF EXEMPT POSITIONS AT THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

SECTION 3.2.(a) G.S. 126-5(c1) is amended by adding the following new subdivisions to read:

"(42) The Executive Director of the State Board of Elections.

(43) Employees of the State Board of Elections, that the Executive Director of the State Board of Elections, at any time, in the Executive Director of the State Board of Elections' discretion, exempts from the application of this Chapter by means of a letter to the Director of the Office of State Human Resources designating these employees. The Executive Director of the State Board of Elections may exempt no more than five employees under the authorization set forth in this subdivision. Any exemptions under this subdivision shall not affect, or be counted against, the number of exempt positions the Auditor may designate in accordance with subdivision (2) of subsection (d) of this section."

SECTION 3.2.(b) G.S. 126-5(d)(2) reads as rewritten:

"(2) Exempt Positions in Council of State Departments and Offices and the Office of the State Controller. – The Secretary of State, the Auditor, the Treasurer, the Attorney General, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Insurance, the Labor Commissioner, and the State Controller may designate exempt positions. The number of exempt policymaking positions in each department headed by an elected department head listed in this subdivision is limited to 25 exempt policymaking positions or two percent (2%) of the total number of full-time positions in the department, whichever is greater. The total number of full-time positions in the Department of the State Auditor shall not include employees of the State Board of Elections. The number of exempt managerial positions is limited to 25 positions or two percent (2%) of the total number of full-time positions in the department, whichever is greater. The number of exempt policymaking positions designated by the Superintendent of Public Instruction is limited to 70 exempt policymaking positions or two percent (2%) of the total number of full-time positions in the department, whichever is greater. The number of exempt managerial positions designated by the Superintendent of Public Instruction is limited to 70 exempt managerial positions or two percent (2%) of the total number of full-time positions in the department, whichever is greater. The total number of exempt positions, policymaking and managerial, designated by the Office of the State Controller is limited to 10."

PART IV. REVISIONS TO UNIFORM MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS ACT

PHOTO ID REQUIRED FOR UOCAVA VOTERS

SECTION 4.1.(a) G.S. 163-258.10 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-258.10. ~~Timely casting~~ Casting of ballot.

(a) To be valid, a military-overseas ballot shall either be received by the appropriate county board of elections no later than the close of the polls, or the covered voter shall submit the ballot for mailing, electronic transmission, or other authorized means of delivery not later than 12:01 A.M., at the place where the voter completes the ballot, on the date of the election.

(b) The covered voter shall submit the military-overseas ballot with a copy of one of the following forms of photographic identification:

(1) An unexpired military identification card issued by the United States government.

(2) An unexpired United States passport card or the photo page of an unexpired United States passport.

(3) An unexpired North Carolina drivers license.

(c) The State Board shall provide the means for any photographic identification electronically submitted in accordance with this section to be submitted in a secure manner."

SECTION 4.1.(b) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

CHANGE TO DEFINITION OF COVERED VOTER

SECTION 4.2.(a) G.S. 163-258.2(1) reads as rewritten:

"(1) "Covered voter" means any of the following:

- a. A uniformed-service voter or an overseas voter who is registered to vote in this State.
- b. A uniformed-service voter defined in subdivision (7) of this section whose voting residence is in this State and who otherwise satisfies this State's voter eligibility requirements.
- c. An overseas voter who, before leaving the United States, was last eligible to vote in this State and, except for a State residency requirement, otherwise satisfies this State's voter eligibility requirements.
- d. An overseas voter who, before leaving the United States, would have been last eligible to vote in this State had the voter then been of voting age and, except for a State residency requirement, otherwise satisfies this State's voter eligibility requirements.
- e. ~~An overseas voter who was born outside the United States, is not described in sub-subdivision c. or d. of this subdivision, and, except for a State residency requirement, otherwise satisfies this State's voter eligibility requirements, if:~~
 1. ~~The last place where a parent or legal guardian of the voter was, or under this Article would have been, eligible to vote before leaving the United States is within this State; and~~
 2. ~~The voter has not previously registered to vote in any other state."~~

SECTION 4.2.(b) G.S. 163-258.5 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-258.5. Overseas voter's registration address.

In registering to vote, an overseas voter who is eligible to vote in this State shall use and shall be assigned to the precinct of the address of the last place of residence of the voter in this State, ~~or, in the case of a voter described by G.S. 163-258.2(1)e., the address of the last place of residence in this State of the parent or legal guardian of the voter.~~ State. If that address is no longer a recognized residential address, the voter shall be assigned an address for voting purposes."

SECTION 4.2.(c) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

CURE DEADLINE FOR UOCAVA VOTERS

SECTION 4.3.(a) Article 21A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 163-258.21. Curable deficiencies.

(a) If a ballot cast under this Article contains a curable deficiency, the county board shall promptly notify the voter of the curable deficiency and the manner in which the voter may cure the deficiency. For purposes of this section, a curable deficiency is when the voter failed to include a photocopy of identification described in G.S. 163-258.10(b).

(b) Any ballot cast under this Article with a curable deficiency that is transmitted to the county board shall be considered timely if cure documentation is received by the day of county

canvass. Cure documentation may be transmitted to the appropriate county board through any of the following methods:

- (1) Mailing cure documentation to the appropriate county board.
- (2) Transmitting cure documentation through the electronic transmission system developed by the State Board.
- (3) Transmitting cure documentation via email to the county board."

SECTION 4.3.(b) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

PART V. CAMPAIGN FINANCE REVISIONS

INCREASE THRESHOLD FOR REPORTING CERTAIN CONTRIBUTIONS

SECTION 5.1.(a) G.S. 163-278.10A reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.10A. Threshold of ~~\$1,000~~ \$3,000 for financial reports for certain candidates.

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Chapter, a candidate for a county office, municipal office, local school board office, soil and water conservation district board of supervisors, or sanitary district board shall be exempted from the reports of contributions, loans, and expenditures required in G.S. 163-278.9(a), 163-278.40B, 163-278.40C, 163-278.40D, and 163-278.40E if to further the candidate's campaign that ~~candidate~~ candidate complies with all of the following:

- (1) Does not receive more than ~~one thousand dollars (\$1,000)~~ three thousand dollars (\$3,000) in contributions, and contributions.
- (2) Does not receive more than ~~one thousand dollars (\$1,000)~~ three thousand dollars (\$3,000) in loans, and loans.
- (3) Does not spend more than ~~one thousand dollars (\$1,000)~~ three thousand dollars (\$3,000).

To qualify for the exemption from those reports, the candidate's treasurer shall file a certification that the candidate does not intend to receive in contributions or loans or expend more than ~~one thousand dollars (\$1,000)~~ three thousand dollars (\$3,000) to further the candidate's campaign. The certification shall be filed with the Board at the same time the candidate files the candidate's Organizational Report as required in G.S. 163-278.7, G.S. 163-278.9, and G.S. 163-278.40A. If the candidate's campaign is being conducted by a political committee which is handling all contributions, loans, and expenditures for the candidate's campaign, the treasurer of the political committee shall file a certification of intent to stay within the threshold amount. If the intent to stay within the threshold changes, or if the ~~one thousand dollar (\$1,000)~~ three-thousand-dollar (\$3,000) threshold is exceeded, the treasurer shall immediately notify the Board and shall be responsible for filing all reports required in G.S. 163-278.9 and 163-278.40B, 163-278.40C, 163-278.40D, and 163-278.40E; provided that any contribution, loan, or expenditure which would have been required to be reported on an earlier report but for this section shall be included on the next report required after the intent changes or the threshold is exceeded.

...."

SECTION 5.1.(b) G.S. 163-278.12 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.12. Special reporting of contributions and independent expenditures.

(a) Subject to G.S. 163-278.39 and G.S. 163-278.14, individuals and other entities not otherwise prohibited from doing so may make independent expenditures. In the event an individual, person, or other entity making independent expenditures but not otherwise required to report them makes independent expenditures in excess of one ~~hundred dollars (\$100.00),~~ thousand dollars (\$1,000), that individual, person, or entity shall file a statement of such independent expenditure with the appropriate board of elections in the manner prescribed by the ~~State Board of Elections.~~ Board.

(b) Any person or entity other than an individual that is permitted to make contributions but is not otherwise required to report them shall report each contribution in excess of one ~~hundred dollars (\$100.00)~~ thousand dollars (\$1,000) with the appropriate board of elections in the manner prescribed by the State ~~Board of Elections~~ Board.

(c) In assuring compliance with subsections (a) and (b) of this section, the State Board of Elections shall require the identification of each person or entity making a donation of more than one ~~hundred dollars (\$100.00)~~ thousand dollars (\$1,000) to the entity filing the report if the donation was made to further the reported independent expenditure or contribution. If the donor is an individual, the statement shall also contain the principal occupation of the donor. The "principal occupation of the donor" shall mean the same as the "principal occupation of the contributor" in G.S. 163-278.11.

(d) Contributions or independent expenditures required to be reported under this section shall be reported within 30 days after they exceed one ~~hundred dollars (\$100.00)~~ thousand dollars (\$1,000) or 10 days before an election the contributions or independent expenditures affect, whichever occurs earlier.

...."

SECTION 5.1.(c) No earlier than October 1, 2025, the State Board of Elections shall adjust the thresholds imposed by G.S. 163-278.10A and G.S. 163-278.12, as enacted by this section, effective for the election cycle beginning January 1, 2027.

48-HOUR REPORT REQUIREMENTS

SECTION 5.2.(a) G.S. 163-278.9 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.9. Statements filed with Board.

(a) Except as provided in G.S. 163-278.10A, the treasurer of each candidate and of each political committee shall file with the Board under certification of the treasurer as true and correct to the best of the knowledge of that officer the following reports:

...

- (2) 48-Hour Report. – A political committee, political party or affiliated party committee that receives a contribution or transfer of funds shall disclose within 48 hours of receipt a contribution or transfer of ~~one two~~ thousand dollars ~~(\$1,000)~~ (\$2,000) or more received before an election but after the period covered by the last report due before that election. The disclosure shall be by report to the State Board identifying the source and amount of the funds. The State Board shall specify the form and manner of making the report, including the reporting of in-kind contributions. The State Board shall increase the dollar amount of the reporting threshold effective each election cycle beginning the period from January 1 of an odd-numbered year through December 31 of the next even-numbered year based on the Consumer Price Index as provided in G.S. 163-278.13(b). The State Board shall set the revised threshold in October of the even-numbered year, publish the revised threshold in the North Carolina Register, and notify the Revisor of Statutes who shall adjust the dollar amount in this subdivision.

...

(a1) Subdivision (a)(2) of this section shall not apply to any candidate campaign committee, as defined by G.S. 163-278.38Z, in a primary election in which the candidate is unopposed on that ballot.

...."

SECTION 5.2.(b) G.S. 163-278.9A(a)(3) reads as rewritten:

- "(3) 48-Hour Report. – A referendum committee that receives a contribution or transfer of funds shall disclose within 48 hours of receipt a contribution or transfer of ~~one two~~ thousand dollars ~~(\$1,000)~~ (\$2,000) or more received before

a referendum but after the period covered by the last report due before that referendum. The disclosure shall be by report to the ~~State Board of Elections~~ identifying the source and amount of such funds. The ~~State Board of Elections~~ shall specify the form and manner of making the report, including the reporting of in-kind contributions. The State Board shall increase the dollar amount of the reporting threshold effective each election cycle beginning the period from January 1 of an odd-numbered year through December 31 of the next even-numbered year based on the Consumer Price Index as provided in G.S. 163-278.13(b). The State Board shall set the revised threshold in October of the even-numbered year, publish the revised threshold in the North Carolina Register, and notify the Revisor of Statutes who shall adjust the dollar amount in this subdivision."

SECTION 5.2.(c) No earlier than October 1, 2025, the State Board of Elections shall adjust the thresholds imposed by G.S. 163-278.9(a)(2) and G.S. 163-278.9A(a)(3), as enacted by this section, effective for the election cycle beginning January 1, 2027.

CONTRIBUTIONS BY FOREIGN NATIONALS

SECTION 5.3.(a) G.S. 163-278.6 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(52) The term "foreign national" means any of the following:

- a. An individual who is not a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States.
- b. A government of a foreign country, or any political subdivision thereof.
- c. A foreign political party.
- d. Any person that is organized under the law of, or has its principal place of business in, a foreign country.
- e. Any person organized and operating in the United States that is wholly or majority owned by a foreign national or combination of foreign nationals unless both of the following apply:
 1. Any contribution or expenditure the person lawfully makes derives entirely from funds generated by operations in the United States.
 2. All decisions concerning the contribution or expenditure are made by individuals who are United States citizens or lawful permanent residents, except for setting overall budget amounts."

SECTION 5.3.(b) G.S. 163-278.9A, as amended by Section 5.2 of this act, reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.9A. Statements filed by referendum committees.

(a) The treasurer of each referendum committee shall file under verification with the Board the following reports:

...

(1a) Organizational Funding Certification. – The treasurer shall file a signed statement with the Board no later than the tenth day following the organization of a referendum committee affirming that no preliminary activity was funded by one or more foreign nationals. Preliminary activity includes conducting a poll, public opinion survey, or focus group; drafting referendum language; telephone calls; and travel.

...

(b) Except as otherwise provided in this Article, each report shall be current within seven days prior to the date the report is due and shall list all contributions received and expenditures made which have not been previously reported.

(c) Any report disclosing contributions required by this section shall include an affirmation by the treasurer that the contributor associated with each contribution is not a foreign national."

SECTION 5.3.(c) G.S. 163-278.15(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) No candidate, political committee, political party, affiliated party committee, or treasurer shall solicit or accept any contribution made by any of the following:

(1) A corporation, foreign or domestic, regardless of whether such corporation does business in the State of North Carolina, or made by Carolina.

(2) ~~any~~ Any business entity, labor union, professional association, or insurance company.

(3) Any foreign national.

(a1) This section does not apply with regard to entities permitted to make contributions by G.S. 163-278.19(h)."

SECTION 5.3.(d) G.S. 163-278.19 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.19. Violations by foreign nationals, corporations, business entities, labor unions, professional associations and insurance companies.

(a) Except as provided in subsections (c), (d), (f), (g), (h), and (i) of this section it shall be unlawful for any foreign national, corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association or insurance company directly or indirectly do any of the following:

(1) To make any contribution to a candidate or political committee.

(2) To pay or use or offer, consent or agree to pay or use any of its money or property for any contribution to a candidate or political committee.

(3) To compensate, reimburse, or indemnify any person or individual for money or property so used or for any contribution or expenditure so made.

(a1) It shall also be unlawful for any officer, director, stockholder, attorney, agent or member of any foreign national, corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association or insurance company to aid, abet, advise or consent to any such contribution, or for any person or individual to solicit or knowingly receive any such contribution. Supporting or opposing the election of clearly identified candidates includes supporting or opposing the candidates of a clearly identified political party. Any officer, director, stockholder, attorney, agent or member of any foreign national, corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association or insurance company aiding or abetting in any contribution made in violation of this section shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor, and shall in addition be liable to such foreign national, corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association or insurance company for the amount of such contribution and the same may be recovered ~~of him~~ upon suit by any stockholder or member ~~thereof~~ thereof against the aiding or abetting officer, director, stockholder, attorney, agent, or member.

(b) A transfer of funds shall be deemed to have been a contribution made indirectly if it is made to any committee, affiliated party committee, or political party account, whether inside or outside this State, with the intent or purpose of being exchanged in whole or in part for any other funds to be contributed or expended in an election for North Carolina office or to offset any other funds contributed or expended in an election for North Carolina office.

(c) Proceeds of loans made in the ordinary course of business by financial institutions may be used for contributions made in compliance with this Subchapter. Financial institutions may also grant revolving credit to political committees and referendum committees in the ordinary course of business.

(d) It shall, however, be lawful for any corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association or insurance company to do any of the following:

- (1) ~~communicate~~ Communicate with its employees, stockholders or members and their families on any ~~subject; to subject.~~
- (2) ~~conduct~~ Conduct nonpartisan registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns aimed at their employees, stockholders, or members and their ~~families; or families.~~
- (3) ~~for~~ For officials and employees of any corporation, insurance company or business entity or the officials and members of any labor union or professional association to establish, administer, contribute to, and to receive and solicit contributions to a separate segregated fund to be utilized for political purposes, and those individuals shall be deemed to become and be a political committee as that term is defined in G.S. 163-278.6(74) or a referendum committee as defined in G.S. 163-278.6(84); provided, however, that it shall be unlawful for any such fund to make a contribution or expenditure by utilizing contributions secured by physical force, job discrimination, financial reprisals or the threat of force, job discrimination or financial reprisals, or by dues, fees, or other moneys required as a condition of membership or employment or as a requirement with respect to any terms or conditions of employment, including, without limitation, hiring, firing, transferring, promoting, demoting, or granting seniority or employment-related benefits of any kind, or by moneys obtained in any commercial transaction whatsoever.

(e) A violation of this section is a Class 2 misdemeanor. In addition, the acceptance of any contribution, reimbursement, or indemnification under subsection (a) shall be a Class 2 misdemeanor.

(f) Whenever a candidate or treasurer is an officer, director, stockholder, attorney, agent, or employee of any corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association or insurance company, and by virtue of ~~his~~ the position therewith uses office space and communication facilities of the corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association or insurance company in the normal and usual scope of ~~his~~ employment, the fact that the candidate or treasurer receives telephone calls, mail, or visits in such office which relates to activities prohibited by this Article shall not be considered a violation under this section.

(g) Notwithstanding the prohibitions specified in this Article and Article 22 of this Chapter, a political committee organized under provisions of this Article shall be entitled to receive and the corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association, or insurance company designated on the political committee's organizational report as the parent entity of the employees or members who organized the political committee is authorized to give reasonable administrative support that shall include record keeping, computer services, billings, mailings to members of the political committee, membership development, fund-raising activities, office supplies, office space, and such other support as is reasonably necessary for the administration of the political committee.

The approximate cost of any reasonable administrative support shall be submitted to the political committee, in writing, and the political committee shall include that cost on the report required by G.S. 163-278.9(a)(4). Also included in the report shall be the approximate allocable portion of the compensation of any officer or employee of the corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association, or insurance company who has devoted more than thirty-five percent (35%) of ~~his~~ that employee's time during normal business hours of the corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association, or insurance company during the period covered by the required report. The approximate cost submitted by the parent corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association, or insurance company shall be entered on the political committee's report as the final entry on its list of "contributions" and a copy of the written approximate cost received by it shall be attached.

The reasonable administrative support given by a corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association, or insurance company shall be designated on the books of the corporation, business entity, labor union, professional association, or insurance company as such and may not be treated by it as a business deduction for State income tax purposes.

(h) This section does not prohibit a contribution by ~~an [a]~~ a person or entity ~~that~~ that meets all of the following criteria:

- (1) Has as an express purpose promoting social, educational, or political ideas and not to generate business ~~income;~~ income.
- (2) Does not have shareholders or other persons which have an economic interest in its assets and ~~earnings;~~ and earnings.
- (3) Was not established by a business corporation, by an insurance company, by a business entity, including, but not limited to, those chartered under Chapter 55, Chapter 55A, Chapter 55B, or Chapter 58 of the General Statutes, by a professional association, or by a labor union and does not receive substantial revenue from such entities. Substantial revenue is rebuttably presumed to be more than ten percent (10%) of total revenues in a calendar year.
- (4) Is not a foreign national.

(i) If a political committee has as its only purpose accepting contributions and making expenditures to influence elections, and that political committee incorporates as a nonprofit corporation to shield its participants from liability created outside this Subchapter, that political committee is not considered to be a corporation for purposes of this section. Incorporation of a political committee does not relieve any individual, person, or other entity of any liability, duty, or obligation created pursuant to any provision of this Subchapter. To obtain the benefits of this subsection, an incorporating political committee must state exactly the following language as the only purpose for which the corporation can be organized: "to accept contributions and make expenditures to influence elections as a political committee pursuant to G.S. 163-278.6(74) only." No political committee shall do business as a political committee after incorporation unless it has been certified by the State Board as being in compliance with this subsection."

SECTION 5.3.(e) G.S. 163-278.19B(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of ~~G.S. 163-278.19,~~ G.S. 163-278.19 and except for a foreign national, a person prohibited by that section from making a contribution may donate to political parties, and affiliated party committees and political parties and affiliated party committees may accept from such a person, money and other things of value donated to a political party headquarters building fund. A foreign national shall not make any contribution or donation to a political party or affiliated party committee."

SECTION 5.3.(f) Article 22A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 163-278.19C. Contributions by foreign nationals.

(a) A foreign national shall not direct, dictate, control, or participate in the decision-making process of any individual's, person's, or referendum committee's activities to influence a referendum, including the making of contributions or independent expenditures. A foreign national shall not coordinate with any individual, person, or referendum committee to influence a referendum.

(b) A foreign national may not solicit, directly or indirectly, the making of a contribution to influence a referendum. A foreign national may not solicit, directly or indirectly, the making of an expenditure by another individual or person to influence a referendum.

(c) A referendum committee shall not, directly or indirectly, solicit or accept any contribution from a foreign national.

(d) Any investigation and enforcement proceeding for alleged violations of this section shall strictly comply with the confidentiality procedures and requirements laid out in this Chapter, including, but not limited to, G.S. 163-278.22 and G.S. 163-278.27."

1 **SECTION 5.3.(g)** G.S. 163-278.19A reads as rewritten:

2 **"§ 163-278.19A. Contributions allowed.**

3 ~~Notwithstanding any other provision of this Chapter, Except as provided in~~
4 G.S. 163-278.19C, it is lawful for any person as defined in G.S. 163-278.6(72) to contribute to a
5 referendum committee."

6 **SECTION 5.3.(h)** G.S. 163-278.27(a) reads as rewritten:

7 "(a) Any individual, candidate, political committee, referendum committee, treasurer,
8 person or media who intentionally violates the applicable provisions of G.S. 163-278.7,
9 163-278.8, 163-278.9, 163-278.10, 163-278.11, 163-278.12, 163-278.13, 163-278.13B,
10 163-278.14, 163-278.16, 163-278.16B, 163-278.17, 163-278.18, 163-278.19, 163-278.19C,
11 163-278.20, 163-278.39, 163-278.40A, 163-278.40B, 163-278.40C, 163-278.40D, 163-278.40E,
12 or 163-278.40J is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. The statute of limitations as stated in
13 G.S. 15-1 shall run from the day the last report is due to be filed with the appropriate board of
14 elections for the election cycle for which the violation occurred."

15 **SECTION 5.3.(i)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2026.

17 **PART VI. SIGNATURE VERIFICATION PILOT PROGRAM**

18 **SECTION 6.(a)** The State Board of Elections shall select 10 counties in the State in
19 which to conduct a pilot program during the primary held in 2026 for signature verification on
20 executed absentee ballots. In selecting the 10 counties for the pilot, the State Board of Elections
21 shall seek diversity of population size, regional location, and demographic composition, and may
22 use the same 10 counties that were selected for the pilot program in accordance with S.L.
23 2023-140. The pilot program shall consist of county boards of elections using signature
24 verification software to check the signatures of voters noted on all executed absentee ballots
25 received by the county boards of elections in the 2026 primary. The State Board of Elections
26 shall select the signature verification software and ensure that the software is available for all 10
27 counties to use in the 2026 primary. The State Board of Elections shall assist the selected county
28 boards of elections in implementing the signature verification software, including assisting the
29 selected county boards of elections in any training needed on how the software is to be used for
30 signature matching on executed absentee ballots.

31 **SECTION 6.(b)** The State Board of Elections shall closely monitor the pilot program
32 established in this section. The selected county boards of elections shall report to the State Board
33 of Elections its findings on the use of the signature verification software during the 2026 primary,
34 including all of the following:

- 35 (1) Whether the signature verification software was used for all executed absentee
36 ballots, and what the voter signature on the executed absentee ballot was
37 matched against.
- 38 (2) How many executed absentee ballots were counted by the county board of
39 elections in the 2026 primary.
- 40 (3) How many executed absentee ballots were flagged by the signature
41 verification software, and any information known on how close of a match the
42 signatures must be for the signature match software to not flag the voter's
43 signature.
- 44 (4) Information on how the signature matching software flagged an executed
45 absentee ballot with a signature that did not match the signature on file for the
46 voter, including any known information on the rate of error in the software.

47 **SECTION 6.(c)** In implementing the pilot program established in this section, no
48 executed absentee ballot shall be rejected by the county board of elections for failing any
49 signature verification. All executed absentee ballots that are otherwise eligible to be counted in
50 accordance with Chapter 163 of the General Statutes shall be counted.

1 **SECTION 6.(d)** The State Board of Elections shall report its findings, along with
2 any recommendations, to the General Assembly on or before May 1, 2026. The report shall be
3 delivered to the Joint Legislative Elections Oversight Committee and shall also include the
4 following:

- 5 (1) A compilation of the information reported from the selected county boards of
6 elections as required by subsection (b) of this section.
- 7 (2) The estimated cost to implement signature verification for absentee ballots
8 statewide.
- 9 (3) Any suggested law changes to fully implement signature verification
10 statewide for absentee ballots, including suggestions on a process for how a
11 voter can cure a deficiency related to signature verification of absentee ballots.
- 12 (4) Any other information relevant to signature verification of absentee ballots.

13 14 **PART VII. TRAINING FOR COUNTY BOARDS OF ELECTIONS**

15 **SECTION 7.1.** The School of Government at the University of North Carolina at
16 Chapel Hill shall work jointly with the State Board of Elections to develop a uniform curriculum
17 to provide trainings for county directors of elections and employees of county boards of elections
18 on the election laws and procedures as provided for in Chapter 163 of the General Statutes.

19 **SECTION 7.2.** The State Board of Elections shall partner with local community
20 colleges to provide a location in which any training conducted by the State Board of Elections or
21 a county board of elections may be held.

22 23 **PART VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE**

24 **SECTION 8.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes
25 law.