

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 958
Committee Substitute Favorable 6/26/25
Committee Substitute #2 Favorable 7/31/25
Committee Substitute #3 Favorable 6/16/26
Committee Substitute #4 Favorable 6/24/26

Short Title: Election Law Changes.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 14, 2025

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

4
5 **PART I. REVISIONS TO BALLOT COUNTING PROCEDURE**

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

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

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

9 **"§ 163-182.2. Initial counting of official ballots.**

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

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

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

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

27 (4) Recodified.

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

33 (6) Recodified.



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

3 (1) Vote counting shall occur at the time and place stated in a resolution adopted
4 by the county board at least two weeks prior to election day, provided that the
5 time stated in the resolution is between 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. on election
6 day. The county board shall not reveal the result of the count prior to the close
7 of polls on election day.

8 (2) Vote counting shall be conducted in the presence or under the supervision of
9 county board members of all political parties then present.

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

13 (4) County boards may review for approval any provisional official ballots and
14 may take preparatory steps for the count of such ballots at a meeting held by
15 the county board prior to election day, pursuant to a resolution adopted by the
16 county board at least two weeks in advance of the meeting, as long as the
17 preparatory steps do not reveal the result of the count prior to the close of polls
18 on election day.

19 (a2) If the county board finds that an individual voting a provisional official ballot (i) was
20 registered in the county as provided in 163-82.1, (ii) voted in the proper precinct under
21 G.S. 163-55 and G.S. 163-57, and (iii) was otherwise eligible to vote, the provisional official
22 ballots shall be counted by the county board no later than ~~5:00 P.M. on the third-fifth~~ business
23 day after the election. Except as provided in G.S. 163-82.15(e), if the county board finds that an
24 individual voting a provisional official ballot (i) did not vote in the proper precinct under
25 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
26 (iii) is otherwise not eligible to vote, the ballot shall not be counted. If a voter was properly
27 registered to vote in the election by the county board, no mistake of an election official in giving
28 the voter a ballot or in failing to comply with G.S. 163-82.15 or G.S. 163-166.11 shall serve to
29 prevent the counting of the vote on any ballot item the voter was eligible by registration and
30 qualified by residency to vote. When an individual has voted a provisional official ballot after
31 completing an affidavit under G.S. 163-166.16(d), and the county board has determined that there
32 are grounds to believe the affidavit is false within five business days after the election, the county
33 board shall determine whether to count the provisional official ballot by the date of the county
34 canvass.

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

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

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

- 1 (1) For each voting system used, the rules shall specify the role of precinct
2 officials and of the county board of ~~elections~~ in the initial counting of official
3 ballots.
- 4 (2) For optical scan and direct record electronic voting systems, and for any other
5 voting systems in which ballots are counted other than on paper by hand and
6 eye, those rules shall provide for a sample hand-to-eye count of the paper
7 ballots of a sampling of a statewide ballot item in every county. The
8 presidential ballot item shall be the subject of the sampling in a presidential
9 election. If there is no statewide ballot item, the State Board shall provide a
10 process for selecting district or local ballot items to adequately sample the
11 electorate. The State Board shall approve in an open meeting the procedure
12 for random sampling for each election. The random sampling for any county
13 shall be done publicly after the initial count of election returns for that county
14 is publicly released or 24 hours after the polls close on election day, whichever
15 is earlier. The sample chosen by the State Board shall be of one or more full
16 precincts, full counts of mailed absentee ballots, and full counts of one or more
17 early voting sites. The size of the sample of each category shall be chosen to
18 produce a statistically significant result and shall be chosen after consultation
19 with a statistician. The actual units shall be chosen at random. In the event of
20 a material discrepancy between the electronic or mechanical count and a
21 hand-to-eye count, the hand-to-eye count shall control, except where paper
22 ballots have been lost or destroyed or where there is another reasonable basis
23 to conclude that the hand-to-eye count is not the true count. If the discrepancy
24 between the hand-to-eye count and the mechanical or electronic count is
25 significant, a complete hand-to-eye count shall be conducted. The sample
26 count need not be done on election night.
- 27 (3) The rules shall provide for accurate unofficial reporting of the results from the
28 precinct to the county board of ~~elections~~ with reasonable speed on the night
29 of the election.
- 30 (4) The rules shall provide for the prompt and secure transmission of official
31 ballots from the voting place to the county ~~board of elections~~ board.

32 (c) The State Board shall direct the county boards of ~~elections~~ in the application of the
33 principles and rules in individual circumstances."

34 **SECTION 1.2.(a)** G.S. 163-82.4(f) reads as rewritten:

35 "(f) Correcting Registration Forms. – If the voter fails to complete any required item on
36 the voter registration form but provides enough information on the form to enable the county
37 board to identify and contact the voter, the voter shall be notified of the omission and given the
38 opportunity to complete the form at least by 12:00 P.M. on the ~~third~~ fifth business day after the
39 election. If the voter corrects that omission within that time and is determined by the county
40 board to be eligible to vote, the county board shall permit the voter to vote. If the information is
41 not corrected by election day, the voter shall be allowed to vote a provisional official ballot. If
42 the correct information is provided to the county board by at least 12:00 P.M. on the ~~third~~ fifth
43 business day after the election, the county board shall count any portion of the provisional official
44 ballot that the voter is eligible to vote."

45 **SECTION 1.2.(b)** G.S. 163-166.12(d) reads as rewritten:

46 "(d) Voting When Identification Numbers Do Not Match. – Regardless of whether an
47 individual has registered by mail or by another method, if the individual has provided with the
48 registration form a drivers license number or last four digits of a Social Security number but the
49 computer validation of the number as required by G.S. 163-82.12 did not result in a match, and
50 the number has not been otherwise validated by the county board, in the first election in which
51 the individual votes that individual shall submit with the ballot the form of identification

1 described in subsection (a) or subsection (b) of this section, depending upon whether the ballot
2 is voted in person or absentee. If that identification is provided no later than 12:00 P.M. on the
3 ~~third-fifth~~ business day after the election and the county board does not determine that the
4 individual is otherwise ineligible to vote a ballot, the failure of identification numbers to match
5 shall not prevent that individual from registering to vote and having that individual's vote
6 counted."

7 **SECTION 1.2.(c)** G.S. 163-166.16(c) reads as rewritten:

8 "(c) Provisional Ballot Required Without Photo Identification. – If the registered voter
9 cannot produce the identification as required in subsection (a) of this section, the registered voter
10 may cast a provisional ballot that is counted only if the registered voter brings an acceptable form
11 of photograph identification listed in subsection (a) of this section to the county board no later
12 than 12:00 P.M. on the ~~third-fifth~~ business day after the election. The State Board shall provide
13 the registered voter casting a provisional ballot due to failure to provide photo identification an
14 information sheet on the deadline to return to the county board to present photo identification,
15 and what forms of photo identification are acceptable, in order for the voter's provisional ballot
16 to be counted."

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

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

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

30 The identification of the two persons witnessing the casting of the absentee ballot in
31 accordance with G.S. 163-231(a) is not a curable deficiency. Any container-return envelope with
32 a curable deficiency that is transmitted to the county board shall be considered timely if cure
33 documentation is received no later than 12:00 P.M. on the ~~third-fifth~~ business day after the
34 election. Cure documentation may be transmitted via email to the county board if the deficiency
35 is one described in subdivision (3) of this subsection. The notification of voters regarding curable
36 deficiencies is an administrative task that may be performed by county board staff and is not
37 required to be performed at an absentee meeting as provided for in subsection (f) of this section.
38 The voter shall be notified of curable deficiencies no later than the close of business on the next
39 business day following the county boards' review of the ballot by mail, and by telephone or ~~email~~
40 email, if the telephone number or email address was provided by the voter on the request form
41 for absentee ballots."

42 **SECTION 1.3.(a)** G.S. 163-166.11 reads as rewritten:

43 **"§ 163-166.11. Provisional voting requirements.**

44 (a) If an individual seeking to vote claims to be a registered voter in a jurisdiction as
45 provided in G.S. 163-82.1 and though eligible to vote in the election does not appear on the
46 official list of eligible registered voters in the voting place, that individual may cast a provisional
47 official ballot as follows:

- 48 (1) An election official at the voting place shall notify the individual that the
49 individual may cast a provisional official ballot in that election.
- 50 (2) The individual may cast a provisional official ballot at that voting place upon
51 executing a written affirmation before an election official at the voting place,

1 stating that the individual is a registered voter in the jurisdiction as provided
2 in G.S. 163-82.1 in which the individual seeks to vote and is eligible to vote
3 in that election.

4 (3) A voter who has moved within the county more than 30 days before election
5 day but has not reported the move to the county board of elections shall not
6 be required to vote a provisional official ballot at the early voting site, as long
7 as the early voting site has available all the information necessary to determine
8 whether a voter is registered to vote in the county and which ballot the voter
9 is eligible to vote based on the voter's proper residence address. The voter with
10 that kind of unreported move shall be allowed to vote the same kind of
11 absentee ballot as other early voters as provided in G.S. 163-166.40.

12 (4) At the time the individual casts the provisional official ballot, the election
13 officials shall provide the individual written information stating that anyone
14 casting a provisional official ballot can ascertain whether and to what extent
15 the ballot was counted and, if the ballot was not counted in whole or in part,
16 the reason it was not counted. The State Board or the county board ~~of elections~~
17 shall establish a system for so informing a provisional voter, which shall be
18 available to every provisional voter without charge and contain reasonable
19 procedures to protect the security, confidentiality, and integrity of the voter's
20 personal information and vote.

21 (5) The cast provisional official ballot and the written affirmation shall be secured
22 by election officials at the voting place according to guidelines and procedures
23 adopted by the State Board. At the close of the polls, election officials shall
24 transmit the provisional official ballots cast at that voting place to the county
25 board ~~of elections~~ for prompt verification according to guidelines and
26 procedures adopted by the State Board. No later than 12:00 P.M. two days
27 after the close of the polls, the county board ~~of elections~~ shall publish the
28 number of provisional official ballots cast on election day, cast by early
29 voting, cast by mail-in absentee ballots received as of election day, and cast
30 by military and overseas absentee ballots cast under Article 21A of this
31 Chapter and received as of election day.

32 (b) If a provisional official ballot cast under this section fails to contain the voter's
33 signature on the affidavit to certify the voter's identity and eligibility to vote, the county board
34 shall notify the voter of the lack of signature on the provisional official ballot no later than the
35 close of business on the next business day following review of the ballot and shall provide the
36 voter an opportunity to cure the lack of signature on the affidavit. The voter shall be notified by
37 mail and by telephone or email, if the telephone number or email address was provided by the
38 voter. The notification of voters regarding curing the lack of signature is an administrative task
39 that may be performed by county board staff and is not required to be performed at a meeting of
40 the county board. If the lack of signature on the affidavit is cured by at least 12:00 P.M. on the
41 fifth business day after the election, the county board shall count any portion of the provisional
42 official ballot that the voter is eligible to vote."

43 **SECTION 1.3.(b)** G.S. 163-166.16, as amended by Section 1.2 of this act, is
44 amended by adding a new subsection to read:

45 "(e1) If any provisional ballot cast under this section fails to contain the signature of the
46 registered voter casting a ballot on the affidavit, the county board shall notify the voter of the
47 lack of signature on the provisional ballot no later than the close of business on the next business
48 day following review of the ballot and shall provide the voter an opportunity to cure the lack of
49 signature on the affidavit. The voter shall be notified by mail and by telephone or email, if the
50 telephone number or email address was provided by the voter. The notification of voters
51 regarding curing the lack of signature is an administrative task that may be performed by county

1 board staff and is not required to be performed at a meeting of the county board. If the lack of
 2 signature on the affidavit is cured by at least 12:00 P.M. on the fifth business day after the
 3 election, the county board shall count any portion of the provisional official ballot that the voter
 4 is eligible to vote."

5 **SECTION 1.4.** G.S. 163-231 reads as rewritten:

6 "**§ 163-231. Voting absentee ballots and transmitting them to the county board of**
 7 **elections.**board.

8 (a) Procedure for Voting Absentee Ballots. – In the presence of two persons who are at
 9 least 18 years of age, and who are not disqualified by G.S. 163-226.3(a)(4) or G.S. 163-237(c),
 10 the voter shall do all of the following:

- 11 (1) Mark the voter's ballots, or cause them to be marked by that person in the
 12 voter's presence according to the voter's instruction.
- 13 (2) Fold each ballot separately, or cause each of them to be folded in the voter's
 14 presence.
- 15 (3) Place the folded ballots in the container-return envelope and securely seal it,
 16 or have this done in the voter's presence.
- 17 (4) Make the application printed on the container-return envelope according to
 18 the provisions of G.S. 163-229(b) and make the certificate printed on the
 19 container-return envelope according to the provisions of G.S. 163-229(b).
- 20 (5) Require those two persons in whose presence the voter marked that voter's
 21 ballots to sign and print their names on the application and certificate as
 22 witnesses and to indicate those persons' addresses. Failure to list a ZIP code
 23 does not invalidate the application and certificate. Failure to include a printed
 24 witness name does not invalidate the application and certificate if the identity
 25 of an individual can solely be ascertained by the witness's signature.
- 26 (6) Do one of the following:
 - 27 a. Have the application notarized. The notary public may be the person
 28 in whose presence the voter marked that voter's ballot.
 - 29 b. Have the two persons in whose presence the voter marked that voter's
 30 ballots to certify that the voter is the registered voter submitting the
 31 marked ballots.

32 Alternatively to the prior paragraph of this subsection, any requirement for two witnesses
 33 shall be satisfied if witnessed by one notary public, who shall comply with all the other
 34 requirements of that paragraph. The notary shall affix a valid notarial seal to the envelope, and
 35 include the word "Notary Public" below his or her signature.

36 The persons in whose presence the ballot is marked shall at all times respect the secrecy of
 37 the ballot and the privacy of the absentee voter, unless the voter requests assistance and that
 38 person is otherwise authorized by law to give assistance. When thus executed, the sealed
 39 container-return envelope, with the ballots enclosed, shall be transmitted in accordance with the
 40 provisions of subsection (b) of this section to the county board ~~of elections~~ which issued the
 41 ballots.

42 (b) Transmitting Executed Absentee Ballots to County ~~Board of Elections.~~ Board. – The
 43 sealed container-return envelope in which executed absentee ballots have been placed shall be
 44 transmitted to the county board ~~of elections~~ who issued those ballots as follows:

- 45 (1) All ballots issued under the provisions of this Article and Article 21A of this
 46 Chapter shall be transmitted by one of the following means:
 - 47 a. Mail or commercial courier service, at the voter's expense, and
 48 received by the county board not later than 7:30 P.M. on the day of the
 49 statewide primary or general election or county bond election.
 - 50 b. Delivered in person, by the voter or the voter's near relative or
 51 verifiable legal guardian, to the county board not later than 7:30 P.M.

1 on the day of the statewide primary or general election or county bond
2 election.

3 c. Electronically transmitted to the county board, if the ballot was issued
4 under the provisions of Article 21A of this Chapter.

5 d. Submitted through the accessible absentee portal, if the ballot was
6 issued to a visually impaired voter who requested an accessible ballot.

7 (2) If ballots are received later than the hour stated in subdivision (1) of this
8 subsection, those ballots shall not be accepted unless required by federal law
9 or the ballots are received in accordance with Article 21A of this Chapter or
10 the State Board or court order extended the closing time of the polls for every
11 poll in the county in accordance with G.S. 163-166.25. If the State Board or
12 court order so extended the closing time of the polls, the ballots shall be
13 received by the closing time as extended by the State Board or court order in
14 order to be counted.

15 (c) Delivering Executed Absentee Ballots in Person. – For purposes of this section,
16 "Delivered in person" ~~includes~~ shall mean the voter or the voter's near relative or verifiable legal
17 guardian physically handing the voted-executed absentee ballot to an election official at the
18 county board office or at an early voting site under Part 5 of Article 14A of this Chapter during
19 any time that early voting site is open for voting, but does not include depositing the voted
20 executed absentee ballot in a drop box or other location designated for the return of voted
21 executed absentee ballots. The voted-If the executed absentee ballot is physically handed to an
22 election official by an individual other than the voter, that individual shall complete an affidavit
23 under penalty of perjury as to how that individual is eligible to return the voter's executed
24 absentee ballot as the voter's near relative or verifiable legal guardian, as defined in G.S. 163-226.

25 (c1) Custody of Executed Absentee Ballots Delivered to Early Voting Site. – Executed
26 absentee ballots delivered to the-an early voting site under Part 5 of Article 14A of this Chapter
27 shall be kept securely and delivered by the election officials at that early voting site to the county
28 board of elections-office for processing.

29 (d) State Board Rules. – The State Board shall adopt rules to implement this section,
30 including a form affidavit for delivery in person of executed absentee ballots which shall be used
31 by all county boards.

32 (e) Counting of Executed Absentee Ballots. – Only those executed absentee ballots
33 transmitted to a county board in accordance with this section shall be counted."

34 **SECTION 1.5.** G.S. 163-234 reads as rewritten:

35 "**§ 163-234. Counting absentee ballots by county board.**

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

38 ...

39 (2) The county board shall meet ~~at 5:00 P.M. on election day~~ in the county board
40 office or other public location in the county courthouse at the hour stated in a
41 resolution adopted by the county board at least two weeks prior to the time the
42 voting place opens in accordance with G.S. 163-166.25, provided that the time
43 stated in the resolution is between 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., for the purpose
44 of counting all absentee ballots except those which have been challenged
45 before 5:00 P.M.-9:00 A.M. on election day and those received pursuant to
46 G.S. 163-231(b)(2). Any elector of the county shall be permitted to attend the
47 meeting and allowed to observe the counting process, so long as the elector
48 does not in any manner interfere with the election officials in the discharge of
49 their duties. The count of these absentee ballots shall be continuous until
50 completed, and the members shall not separate or leave the counting place
51 except for unavoidable necessity.

1 The county board may begin counting absentee ballots issued under
 2 Article 21A of this Chapter between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.
 3 and may begin counting all absentee ballots between the hours of 2:00 P.M.
 4 and 5:00 P.M. upon the adoption of a resolution at least two weeks prior to the
 5 election in which the hour and place of counting absentee ballots shall be
 6 stated. A copy of the resolution shall be published once a week for two weeks
 7 prior to the election, in a newspaper having general circulation in the county.
 8 Notice may additionally be made on a radio or television station or both, but
 9 the notice shall be in addition to the newspaper and other required notice. The
 10 count shall be continuous until completed and the members shall not separate
 11 or leave the counting place except for unavoidable necessity, except that if the
 12 count has been completed prior to the time the polls close, it shall be
 13 suspended until that time pending receipt of any additional ballots. The county
 14 board may recess the meeting in accordance with G.S. 143-318.12(b)(1) prior
 15 to completing the count of absentee ballots but shall not adjourn the meeting
 16 until the count of the absentee ballots is complete. The State Board shall adopt
 17 rules as to how county boards reflect any recesses in the full and accurate
 18 minutes of the meeting such that a person not in attendance would have a
 19 reasonable understanding of what transpired before and after any recess,
 20 including the number of outstanding absentee ballots immediately before and
 21 after any recess.

22 (2a) Nothing in this section prohibits a county board from taking preparatory steps
 23 for the count earlier than the times specified in this section, as long as the
 24 preparatory steps do not reveal to any individual not engaged in the actual
 25 count election results before the times specified in this subdivision for the
 26 count to begin. By way of illustration and not limitation, a preparatory step
 27 for the count would be the entry of tally cards from direct record electronic
 28 voting units into a computer for processing. The county board shall not
 29 announce the result of the count before 7:30 P.M. prior to the close of polls on
 30 election day.

31 ...

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

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

41 **SECTION 1.6.** G.S. 163-275 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

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

45 **SECTION 1.7.** Section 1.4 of this Part becomes effective January 1, 2027, and
 46 applies to elections conducted on or after that date. Section 1.6 of this Part is effective when it
 47 becomes law and applies to offenses committed on or after that date. The remainder of this Part
 48 is effective when it becomes law and applies to elections held on or after that date.

49 **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, 2027, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

SUSPENSION 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. Suspension or 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. Suspension or removal of precinct officials; vacancies.

(a) Any precinct official may be suspended or removed, including on the day of the election or primary, for incompetency or failure to discharge the duties of office by the county

1 board in accordance with G.S. 163-33. The county board may prohibit a precinct official who
2 has been suspended or removed from serving as a precinct official in any subsequent election.

3 (b)

4"

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

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

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

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

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

34 **"§ 163-82.24. Statewide training and certification for election officials.**

35 (a) ~~Training.~~—The State Board ~~of Elections~~ shall conduct training programs in election
36 law and procedures.

37 (a1) Every county elections director shall receive training conducted by the State Board at
38 least as often as required in the following schedule:

- 39 (1) Once during each odd-numbered year before the municipal election held in
40 the ~~county~~—county.
- 41 (2) Once during each even-numbered year before the first partisan ~~primary~~;
42 ~~and~~—primary.
- 43 (3) Once during each even-numbered year after the partisan primaries but before
44 the general election.

45 (a2) Every member of a county board ~~of elections~~ shall receive training conducted by the
46 State Board at least once during the six months after the member's initial appointment and at least
47 once again during the first two years of the member's service. If an election occurs prior to the
48 county board member's training, the State Board shall make available training materials for use
49 by that county board member until the training required by this subsection is completed.

1 (a3) The State Board of Elections shall ~~promulgate~~ adopt rules for the training of precinct
2 officials, which shall be followed by the county ~~boards of elections~~ boards. At a minimum, the
3 training for all precinct officials shall include information regarding all of the following:

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

15 (b) ~~Certification.~~—The State Board of Elections shall conduct a program for certification
16 of election officials. The program shall include training in election law and procedures. Before
17 issuing certification to an election official, the State Board shall administer an examination
18 designed to determine the proficiency of the official in election law and procedures. The State
19 Board shall set adequate standards for the passage of the examination."

20 **SECTION 2.2.(h)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2027, and applies to
21 elections held on or after that date.
22

23 **DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT VOTING PLACE**

24 **SECTION 2.3.(a)** G.S. 14-132 reads as rewritten:

25 "**§ 14-132. Disorderly conduct in and injuries to public buildings and facilities.**

26 (a) It is a misdemeanor ~~if for~~ any person ~~shall to do any of the following:~~

- 27 (1) Make any rude or riotous noise, or ~~be guilty of engage in~~ any disorderly
28 conduct, in or near any public building or ~~facility; or facility.~~
- 29 (2) Unlawfully write or scribble on, mark, deface, besmear, or injure the walls of
30 any public building or facility, or any statue or monument situated in any
31 public ~~place; or place.~~
- 32 (3) Commit any nuisance in or near any public building or facility.

33 (b) Any person in charge of any public building or facility ~~owned or controlled by the~~
34 ~~State, any subdivision of the State, or any other public agency~~ shall have authority to arrest
35 summarily and without warrant for a violation of this section.

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

- 39 (1) One to which the public or a portion of the public has access and is owned or
40 controlled by the State, any subdivision of the State, any other public agency,
41 or any private institution or agency of a charitable, educational, or
42 ~~eleemosynary nature; or philanthropic nature.~~
- 43 (2) Dedicated to the use of the general public for a purpose which is primarily
44 concerned with public recreation, cultural activities, and other events of a
45 public nature or character.
- 46 (3) Designated by the Director of the State Bureau of Investigation in accordance
47 with G.S. 143B-987.
- 48 (4) One temporarily in use as a voting place under Chapter 163 of the General
49 Statutes throughout each calendar day that the public building or facility is
50 either used as a voting place or is being prepared for use as a voting place.

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

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

7 **SECTION 2.3.(b)** G.S. 163-166.4(b) reads as rewritten:

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

14 **SECTION 2.3.(c)** This section becomes effective October 1, 2026, and applies to
 15 offenses committed on or after that date.

17 CHANGES TO ADDRESS VERIFICATION PROCESS

18 **SECTION 2.4.(a)** G.S. 163-82.7 reads as rewritten:

19 "**§ 163-82.7. Verification of qualifications and address of applicant; denial or approval of**
 20 **application.**

21 (a) Tentative Determination of Qualification. – ~~When a county board of elections~~
 22 ~~receives~~ Within a reasonable time after receiving an application for registration submitted
 23 pursuant to G.S. 163-82.6, the county board ~~either~~ shall do one of the following:

24 (1) ~~Shall make~~ Make a determination that the applicant is not qualified to vote at
 25 the address given, ~~or given.~~

26 (2) ~~Shall make~~ Make a tentative determination that the applicant is qualified to
 27 vote at the address given, subject to the mail verification notice procedure
 28 outlined in ~~subsection~~ subsections (c) and (e) of this section.

29 ~~within a reasonable time after receiving the application.~~

30 (a1) Distribution to County Boards. – If the State Board receives a voter registration
 31 application, the State Board shall forward the application to the appropriate county board in a
 32 timely manner. If the application is received by the State Board within the 100 days prior to an
 33 election, the State Board shall forward the application to the appropriate county board within two
 34 business days of receipt.

35 (b) Denial of Registration. – ~~If the county board of elections~~ makes a determination
 36 pursuant to subsection (a) of this section that the applicant is not qualified to vote at the address
 37 given, the county board shall send, by certified mail, a notice of denial of registration. The notice
 38 of denial shall contain the date on which registration was denied, and shall be mailed within two
 39 business days after denial. The notice of denial shall inform the applicant of alternatives that the
 40 applicant may pursue to exercise the franchise. If the applicant disagrees with the denial, the
 41 applicant may appeal the decision under G.S. 163-82.18.

42 (c) Verification of Address by Mail. – ~~If~~ Except as otherwise provided by this subsection,
 43 if the county board of elections tentatively determines that the applicant is qualified to vote at the
 44 address given, then the county board shall send a notice to the applicant, by nonforwardable mail,
 45 at the address the applicant provides on the application form. The notice shall state that the county
 46 board will register the applicant to vote if the Postal Service does not return the notice as
 47 undeliverable to the county board. The notice shall also inform the applicant of the precinct and
 48 voting place to which the applicant will be assigned if registered. If the application is received
 49 by the county board within the 100 days prior to an election, the county board shall mail the
 50 notice required by this subsection within two business days of processing the application.

1 (d) Approval of Application. – If the Postal Service does not return the notice as
2 undeliverable, the county board shall register the applicant to vote.

3 (e) Second Notice if First Notice Is Returned as Undeliverable. – If the Postal Service
4 returns the notice as undeliverable, the county board shall send a second notice by
5 nonforwardable mail to the same address to which the first was sent. If the second notice is not
6 returned as undeliverable, the county board shall register the applicant to vote. If the county board
7 receives a notice returned as undeliverable within the 100 days prior to an election, the county
8 board shall mail the notice required by this subsection within one business day of receipt of the
9 return notice.

10 (f) Denial of Application Based on Lack of Verification of Address. – If the Postal
11 Service returns as undeliverable the notice sent by nonforwardable mail pursuant to subsection
12 (e) of this section, the county board shall deny the application. The county board need not try to
13 notify the applicant further.

14 (g) Voting When Verification Process Is Incomplete. – In cases where an election occurs
15 before the process of verification outlined in this section has had time to be completed, the county
16 board of elections shall be guided by the following rules:

17 (1) If the county board has made a tentative determination that an applicant is
18 qualified to vote under subsection (a) of this section, then that person shall not
19 be denied the right to vote in person in an election unless the Postal Service
20 has returned as undeliverable two notices to the applicant: one mailed pursuant
21 to subsection (c) of this section and one mailed pursuant to subsection (e) of
22 this section. This subdivision does not preclude a challenge to the voter's
23 qualifications under Article 8 of this Chapter.

24 (2) If the Postal Service has returned as undeliverable a notice sent within 25 days
25 before the election to the applicant under subsection (c) or subsection (e)
26 of this section, then the applicant may vote only in person in accordance with
27 Article 14A of this Chapter in that first election and may not vote by absentee
28 ballot. The county board of elections shall establish a procedure at the voting
29 site for doing both of the following:

- 30 a. Obtaining the correct address of any person described in this
31 subdivision who appears to vote in person.
32 b. Assuring that the person votes in the proper place and in the proper
33 contests.

34 If a notice mailed under subsection (c) or subsection (e) of this section is
35 returned as undeliverable after a person has already voted by absentee ballot,
36 then that person's ballot may be challenged in accordance with G.S. 163-89.

37 (3) If a notice ~~sent pursuant to~~ mailed under subsection (c) or subsection (e)
38 of this section is returned by the Postal Service as undeliverable after a person
39 has already voted in an election, then the county board shall treat the person
40 as a registered voter but shall send a confirmation mailing pursuant to
41 G.S. 163-82.14(d)(2) and remove or retain the person on the registration
42 records in accordance with that subdivision."

43 **SECTION 2.4.(b)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2027, and applies to
44 verification notices sent or received by a county board of elections on or after that date.

45 **CLOSING OF EQUIPMENT FOLLOWING EARLY VOTING**

46 **SECTION 2.5.(a)** G.S. 163-166.40 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

47 "(j) At the conclusion of the early voting period provided for in subsection (b) of this
48 section, each county board shall comply with all of the following:

- 49 (1) All voting equipment used during the early voting period is rendered unable
50 to receive additional votes associated with the early voting period.
51

- 1 (2) All voting equipment used during the early voting period is maintained so that
 2 the tally of the initial counting of early voting ballots is conducted in
 3 accordance with G.S. 163-182.2(a1).
- 4 (3) The storage of any paper ballots cast during the early voting period are
 5 preserved in a locked and secured space, access to which is controlled and the
 6 chain of custody is limited and maintained, prior to the initial counting of early
 7 voting ballots in accordance with G.S. 163-182.2(a1), which storage shall be
 8 separate and apart from the storage of any electronic record of the votes cast
 9 during the early voting period in accordance with subdivision (4) of this
 10 subsection.
- 11 (4) Any electronic record of votes cast during the early voting period shall be
 12 secured and preserved in a locked and secured space, access to which is
 13 controlled and the chain of custody is limited and maintained, prior to the
 14 initial counting of early voting ballots in accordance with G.S. 163-182.2(a1).
 15 The electronic record of votes cast during the early voting period may be
 16 detached from the voting equipment for purposes of storage under this
 17 subdivision."

18 **SECTION 2.5.(b)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to
 19 elections held on or after that date.

21 **APPOINTMENT OF OBSERVERS IN NONPARTISAN ELECTIONS**

22 **SECTION 2.6.(a)** G.S. 163-45.1(b) reads as rewritten:

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

- 24 (1) The chair of each political party in the county may designate two registered
 25 voters of the county to serve as observers at each voting place in that county
 26 in which the political party has a candidate appearing on the ballot.
- 27 (2) The chair of each political party in the county may designate up to 10
 28 registered voters of the county to serve as observers at any voting place in the
 29 county in which the political party has a candidate appearing on the ballot.
- 30 (3) The chair of each political party in the State may designate up to 100 registered
 31 voters of the State to serve as observers at any voting place in the State in
 32 which the political party has a candidate appearing on the ballot.
- 33 (4) An unaffiliated candidate or the unaffiliated candidate's campaign manager
 34 may designate up to two ~~observers~~ registered voters to serve as observers at
 35 each voting place in which that unaffiliated candidate appears on the ballot.
- 36 (5) A nonpartisan candidate in a municipal election, special district election, or
 37 board of education election or the nonpartisan candidate's campaign manager
 38 may designate up to one registered voter to serve as an observer at each voting
 39 place in which that nonpartisan candidate appears on the ballot."

40 **SECTION 2.6.(b)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2027, and applies to
 41 elections held on or after that date.

43 **REVISIONS TO LIST MAINTENANCE**

44 **SECTION 2.7.(a)** G.S. 163-82.14 reads as rewritten:

45 "**§ 163-82.14. List maintenance.**

46 ...

47 (a1) Methods of List Maintenance; Cross State Checks. – List maintenance efforts under
 48 this section shall be nondiscriminatory and shall comply with the provisions of the Voting Rights
 49 Act of 1965, as amended, and with the provisions of the National Voter Registration Act. The
 50 State Board, in addition to the methods set forth in this section, may use other methods toward
 51 the ends set forth in subsection (a) of this section, including address-updating services provided

1 by the Postal Service and entering into data sharing agreements with other states to cross-check
 2 information on voter registration and voting records. Any data sharing agreement shall require
 3 the other state or states to comply with G.S. 163-82.10 and ~~G.S. 163-82.10B~~ G.S. 163-82.10B
 4 with respect to voter registration data of this State. Notwithstanding G.S. 163-82.10, disclosure
 5 of any voter registration data received from other states pursuant to a data sharing agreement
 6 with that state shall be controlled by the data sharing agreement, provided that the data sharing
 7 agreement is not more restrictive than the other states' public record laws.

8 (b) Death. – In order to remove the names of deceased persons from the list of eligible
 9 voters in this State, the following shall occur:

- 10 (1) At a minimum of once per week, the Department of Health and Human
 11 Services shall furnish free of charge to the Executive Director, in a format
 12 prescribed by the State Board, the names of deceased persons who were
 13 residents of the State. ~~Upon receipt of the list from the Department of Health~~
 14 ~~and Human Services, the~~ On a weekly basis, the Executive Director shall
 15 distribute to each county board of elections the names on that the list received
 16 from the Department of Health and Human Services of deceased persons who
 17 were residents of that county. Upon the receipt of those names, each county
 18 board of elections shall remove from its voter registration records any person
 19 the list shows to be deceased each week. The State Board shall confirm that
 20 each county board has removed the names of deceased persons from the list
 21 of eligible voters in this State.
- 22 (2) Upon receipt of a signed statement of a near relative or personal representative
 23 of the estate of a deceased voter indicating that the person has died, a county
 24 board ~~of elections~~ shall remove the person identified as deceased from its
 25 voter registration records within one week of receipt of the signed statement.
 26 The county board does not need to send any notice to the address of the person
 27 before removing the person from its voter registration records.
- 28 (3) If the State Board requests and receives any information from a federal agency
 29 pertaining to death records of registered voters in this State, the Executive
 30 Director shall determine whether any person identified in the information as
 31 deceased is a registered voter in this State. Within one week of receipt of the
 32 information, the Executive Director shall distribute to each county board the
 33 names of those registered voters who were residents of that county. Upon
 34 receipt of those names, the chair of each county board shall initiate a challenge
 35 proceeding under G.S. 163-85, with the burden of proof remaining on the
 36 challenger pursuant to G.S. 163-90.1. Any hearing on a challenge under this
 37 subdivision shall be conducted pursuant to G.S. 163-86.

38"

39 **SECTION 2.7.(b)** G.S. 20-7(b2) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

40 "(9) To the State Board of Elections for the purpose of voter registration and list
 41 maintenance. The Division shall furnish the State Board of Elections with
 42 each month's data on a routine schedule of no later than the fifteenth day of
 43 each month."

44 **SECTION 2.7.(c)** If the State Board of Elections received information regarding
 45 potential ineligible voters appearing on the State's voter registration records from a federal
 46 database on or after January 1, 2026, and a challenge has not been entered against a voter
 47 appearing on the information from the federal database and the voter has not otherwise been
 48 removed from the list of eligible voters in the State, then the State Board shall create a process
 49 for removing such voters from the State's voter registration records by August 1, 2026. The
 50 process created by the State Board pursuant to this subsection for removing any potential
 51 ineligible voters from the State's voter registration records shall comply with the following:

- 1 (1) The Executive Director of the State Board shall distribute to each county
2 board the names of the individuals registered to vote in that county whose
3 name appears on the information received from a federal database as a
4 potential ineligible voter.
- 5 (2) Upon receipt of the names from the Executive Director of the State Board, the
6 chair of the county board shall initiate a challenge proceeding under
7 G.S. 163-85, with the burden of proof remaining on the challenger pursuant
8 to G.S. 163-90.1.
- 9 (3) The registered voter shall be sent notice that the chair of the county board
10 initiated a challenge proceeding on the registered voter's eligibility due to the
11 fact that the State Board of Elections received information from a federal
12 database calling into question the eligibility of the registered voter.
- 13 (4) Any hearing on the challenge shall be conducted pursuant to G.S. 163-86.

14 **SECTION 2.7.(d)** Subsection (a) of this section becomes effective January 1, 2027.

15 The remainder of this section is effective when it becomes law.

16
17 **CHANGES TO VOTER AND BALLOT CHALLENGES**

18 **SECTION 2.8.(a)** Article 8 of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by
19 adding a new section to read:

20 **"§ 163-90.4. Audit and challenge of ineligible votes cast.**

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

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

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

36 **SECTION 2.8.(b)** G.S. 163-89 reads as rewritten:

37 **"§ 163-89. Procedures for challenging ballots cast during early voting and absentee ballots.**

38 (a) Time for Challenge. – ~~The absentee ballot of any voter~~ Ballots cast under Part 5 of
39 Article 14A of this Chapter may be challenged no later than the close of polls on the day of the
40 primary or general election or county bond election. Ballots cast under Article 20 and Article
41 21A of this Chapter that are received by the county board of elections pursuant to
42 G.S. 163-231(b)(1) may be challenged no later than 5:00 P.M. on the fifth business day after the
43 primary or general election or county bond election. ~~The absentee ballot of any voter~~ Ballots cast
44 under Article 20 and Article 21A of this Chapter that are received by the county board of elections
45 pursuant to G.S. 163-231(b)(2) may be challenged no later than 5:00 P.M. on the next business
46 day following the deadline for receipt of such absentee ballots.

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

49 (c) Form and Nature of Challenge. – Each challenged ~~absentee~~ ballot shall be challenged
50 separately. The burden of proof shall be on the challenger. Each challenge shall be made in
51 writing and, if ~~they are~~ available, shall be made on forms prescribed by the State Board of

1 ~~Elections.~~ Board. Each challenge shall specify the reasons why the ballot does not comply with
2 the provisions of this ~~Article~~ Chapter or why the ~~absentee-challenged~~ voter is not legally entitled
3 to vote in the particular primary or election. The challenge shall be signed by the challenger.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

45 (1) Before the county board hears the challenge, the chair shall mark the word
46 "challenged" after the voter's name in the register of absentee ballot
47 applications and ballots issued and in the pollbook of absentee voters.

48 (2) If the challenge is sustained, the chair shall mark the word "sustained" after
49 the word "challenged" following the voter's name in the register of absentee
50 ballot applications and ballots issued and in the pollbook of absentee voters,
51 and the container return envelope shall not be opened but shall be marked

1 "Challenge Sustained." All envelopes so marked shall be preserved intact by
2 the chair for a period of six months from canvass day or longer if any contest
3 then is pending concerning the validity of any challenged ballot."

4 **SECTION 2.8.(c)** G.S. 163-90.2 reads as rewritten:

5 **"§ 163-90.2. Action when challenge sustained, overruled, or dismissed.**

6 (a) When any challenge is sustained for any cause listed under G.S. 163-85(c), the county
7 board shall mark the word "sustained" after the word "challenged" in the registration records of
8 the voter challenged as required by G.S. 163-85(b) and indicate the reason for the sustained
9 challenge. The county board shall cancel or correct the voter registration of the voter. The county
10 board shall maintain such record for at least six months and during the pendency of any appeal.
11 The challenged ballot shall be counted for any ballot items for which the challenged voter is
12 eligible to vote, as if it were a provisional official ballot under the provisions of
13 G.S. 163-166.11(4). For any challenge sustained for death of the voter under G.S. 163-85(c)(6),
14 the challenged ballot shall not be counted if the voter died between the time the challenged ballot
15 was cast and 11:59 P.M. on the day before the election.

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

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

24 **SECTION 2.8.(d)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2027, and applies to
25 challenges filed on or after that date.

26
27 **APPLY TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE EXPIRATION OF CERTAIN CLASS**
28 **C DRIVERS LICENSES TO PHOTO IDENTIFICATION PRESENTED FOR VOTING**

29 **SECTION 2.9.(a)** During the time period that a Class C drivers license expiration
30 date is extended in accordance with Section 18 of S.L. 2025-47, that Class C drivers license shall
31 be deemed valid and unexpired for the purposes of G.S. 163-166.16.

32 **SECTION 2.9.(b)** This section is effective when it becomes law and shall expire
33 December 31, 2027.

34
35 **VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS INDICATING LACK OF CITIZENSHIP**

36 **SECTION 2.10.(a)** G.S. 163-82.19(a) reads as rewritten:

37 "(a) Voter Registration at Drivers License Offices. – The Division of Motor Vehicles
38 shall, pursuant to the rules adopted by the State ~~Board of Elections, Board,~~ modify its forms so
39 that any eligible person who applies for original issuance, renewal or correction of a drivers
40 license, or special identification card issued under G.S. 20-37.7 may, on a part of the form,
41 complete an application to register to vote, or to update the voter's registration if the voter has
42 changed his or her address or moved from one precinct to another or from one county to another.
43 The person taking the application shall ask if the applicant is a citizen of the United States. If the
44 applicant states that the applicant is not a citizen of the United States, or declines to answer the
45 question, the person taking the application shall inform the applicant that it is a felony for a
46 person who is not a citizen of the United States to apply to register to vote. The application shall
47 state in clear language the penalty for violation of this section. The person taking an application
48 to register to vote or to update the voter's registration shall proceed with the application only if
49 the applicant affirmatively states that the applicant is a citizen of the United States. The necessary
50 forms shall be prescribed by the State ~~Board of Elections, Board.~~ The form must ask for the
51 previous voter registration address of the voter, if any. If a previous address is listed, and it is not

1 in the county of residence of the applicant, the appropriate county board of elections shall treat
2 the application as an authorization to cancel the previous registration and also process it as such
3 under the procedures of G.S. 163-82.9. If a previous address is listed and that address is in the
4 county where the voter applies to register, the application shall be processed as if it had been
5 submitted under G.S. 163-82.9.

6 (a1) Timely Registration at Drivers License Offices. – Registration shall become effective
7 as provided in G.S. 163-82.7. Applications to register to vote accepted at a drivers license office
8 under this section until the deadline established in G.S. 163-82.6(d)(2) shall be treated as timely
9 made for an election, and no person who completes an application at that drivers license office
10 shall be denied the vote in that election for failure to apply earlier than that deadline.

11 (a2) Forwarding Voter Registrations at Drivers License Offices. – All applications shall
12 be forwarded by the Department of Transportation to the appropriate county board of elections
13 not later than five business days after the date of acceptance, according to rules which shall be
14 promulgated by the State Board of Elections. Board. Those rules shall provide for a paperless,
15 instant, electronic transfer of applications to the appropriate board of elections county board."

16 **SECTION 2.10.(b)** G.S. 163-82.20(e) reads as rewritten:

17 "(e) Prohibitions. – Any person providing any service under subsection (b) of this section
18 shall ~~not~~ not do any of the following:

- 19 (1) Seek to influence an applicant's political preference or party registration,
20 except that this shall not be construed to prevent the notice provided by
21 G.S. 163-82.4(d) to be given if the applicant refuses to declare his party
22 affiliation; affiliation.
- 23 (2) Display any such political preference or party allegiance; allegiance.
- 24 (3) Make any statement to an applicant or take any action the purpose or effect of
25 which is to discourage the applicant from registering to vote; or vote.
- 26 (4) Make any statement to an applicant or take any action the purpose or effect of
27 which is to lead the applicant to believe that a decision to register or not to
28 register has any bearing on the availability of services or benefits.
- 29 (5) Proceed with any voter registration application if the applicant does not
30 affirmatively indicate the applicant is a citizen of the United States."

31 **SECTION 2.10.(c)** Article 7A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by
32 adding a new section to read:

33 **"§ 163-83. Requirement for citizenship on voter registration applications.**

34 (a) When making the tentative determination of qualification in accordance with
35 G.S. 163-82.7(a), the county board shall process the voter registration application in accordance
36 with this Article only if the voter registration application affirmatively indicates that the applicant
37 is a citizen of the United States.

38 (b) If a county board receives a voter registration application in which no answer is
39 indicated as to the question of whether the applicant is a citizen of the United States, then the
40 county board shall send a notice to the applicant that the voter registration application must
41 indicate whether the applicant is a citizen of the United States in order to be processed, and the
42 applicant must provide a statement under penalty of perjury concerning citizenship. The notice
43 sent from the county board shall include a form for the applicant to fill out answering the question
44 of whether the applicant is a citizen of the United States and shall indicate that the form must be
45 mailed or hand-delivered to the county board within 30 days from the date the notice was sent in
46 order for the applicant's voter registration application to be processed. If the form is received by
47 the county board within 30 days from the date the notice was mailed, the county board shall
48 proceed with the voter registration application accordingly. If the form is not received by the
49 county board within 30 days from the date the notice was mailed, the county board shall not
50 approve the voter registration application, shall not add the individual to the list of registered
51 voters of the State, and shall notify the voter of the denial in accordance with G.S. 163-82.7(b)."

1 **SECTION 2.10.(d)** G.S. 163-82.18(a) reads as rewritten:

2 "(a) Right to Appeal. – Any applicant who receives notice of denial of registration
3 pursuant to G.S. 163-82.7 or G.S. 163-83 may appeal the denial within five days after receipt of
4 the notice of denial. The county board of elections shall promptly set a date for a public hearing.
5 The notice of appeal shall be in writing and shall be signed by the appealing party, shall include
6 the appealing party's name, date of birth, address, and reasons for the appeal."

7 **SECTION 2.10.(e)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2027, and applies to
8 voter registration applications processed on or after that date.

9
10 **POST-ELECTION AUDITS BY STATE AUDITOR**

11 **SECTION 2.11.** Article 5A of Chapter 147 of the General Statutes is amended by
12 adding a new section to read:

13 **"§ 147-64.6Q. Audit of general elections.**

14 (a) In addition to any authority granted in G.S. 147-64.7, after the certification of each
15 general election under Chapter 163 of the General Statutes, the Auditor shall randomly select
16 counties of the State in which to conduct post-election audits of election system and controls.
17 The number of audits to be conducted is at the discretion of the Auditor, but all county boards of
18 elections must be audited at least once every six years.

19 (b) No county audit under this section shall occur until after the election is certified
20 pursuant to G.S. 163-182.15. Nothing in this section supersedes, overrides, or replaces any
21 procedures in Article 15A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes. No findings in audits under
22 this section shall be used as grounds to challenge the final result of an election. Audits under this
23 section are in addition to audits conducted under G.S. 163-182.12A.

24 (c) In conducting audits under this section, the Auditor may examine all of the following
25 areas:

- 26 (1) The accuracy of voter rolls and compliance with list maintenance
27 requirements in State and federal law.
28 (2) Procedures for testing voting equipment before counting ballots, including the
29 ballots used for testing the equipment and the storage and maintenance of the
30 equipment.
31 (3) Records of ballots distributed, ballots voted, poll book records, and ballots
32 tabulated.
33 (4) Chain of custody and seal documentation.
34 (5) Absentee ballots, absentee ballot applications, and absentee ballot
35 container-return envelopes to ensure appropriate processing and counting of
36 absentee ballots.
37 (6) Provisional ballots, provisional ballot envelopes, and records regarding
38 provisional ballots.
39 (7) Compliance with all State and federal laws regarding contact with voters and
40 voter assistance.
41 (8) Any areas of concern regarding election accuracy, security, or credibility
42 uncovered over the course of the audit.

43 (d) Election officials of the county under audit may be present during a county audit under
44 this section and shall preserve chain of custody of cast ballots and other documents, when
45 applicable.

46 (e) The Auditor shall produce annual reports of the audits conducted under this section
47 and make them accessible on the Office of the State Auditor's website in perpetuity. The report
48 shall include details of which areas listed in subsection (c) of this section were examined and the
49 Auditor's findings related to those areas. The report may include recommendations for best
50 practices, additional training, oversight, or changes to election administration. Before submitting
51 the report, the Auditor shall allow a board of elections for any county discussed in the report to

1 review the report and provide comments to be submitted along with it in accordance with
2 G.S. 147-64.6(c)(13). The reports shall not violate any applicable confidentiality laws.

3 (f) If the Auditor receives or collects information during an audit under this section that
4 the Auditor believes may be evidence of a violation of State or federal law, the Auditor shall
5 refer this evidence in accordance with G.S. 147-64.6B.

6 (g) If an error, inefficiency, or vulnerability in a county's election system or controls is
7 uncovered in an audit under this section, the county board of elections shall submit a report to
8 the Auditor, the State Board of Elections, and the county board of commissioners outlining its
9 plan to fix the error, inefficiency, or vulnerability.

10 (h) The Auditor, in collaboration with the State Board of Elections, shall develop an audit
11 manual that details the policies and procedures guiding audits under this section. This manual
12 shall not have the force of law. The manual shall not be altered within the 90 days preceding an
13 election in which the manual is utilized to conduct an audit under this section."

14 **CHANGE DATE FOR WHEN CERTAIN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS HELD**

15 **SECTION 2.12.(a)** G.S. 163-279(a) reads as rewritten:

16
17 "(a) Primaries and elections for offices filled by election of the people in cities, towns,
18 incorporated villages, and special districts shall be held in 1973 and every two or four years
19 thereafter as provided by municipal charter on the following days:

- 20 (1) If the election is nonpartisan and decided by simple plurality, the election shall
21 be held on Tuesday after the first Monday in November.
- 22 (2) If the election is partisan, the election shall be held on Tuesday after the first
23 Monday in November, the first primary shall be held on the second Tuesday
24 after Labor Day, and the second primary, if required, shall be held on the
25 fourth Tuesday before the election.
- 26 (3) If the election is nonpartisan and the nonpartisan primary method of election
27 is used, the election shall be held on Tuesday after the first Monday in
28 November and the nonpartisan primary shall be held on the ~~fourth Tuesday~~
29 ~~before the election.~~ second Tuesday after Labor Day.
- 30 (4) If the election is nonpartisan and the election and runoff election method of
31 election is used, the election shall be held on the ~~fourth Tuesday before the~~
32 ~~Tuesday after the first Monday in November,~~ second Tuesday after Labor
33 Day, and the runoff election, if required, shall be held on Tuesday after the
34 first Monday in November."

35 **SECTION 2.12.(b)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2027, and applies to
36 elections held on or after that date.

37 **ELIGIBILITY TO FILE AS CANDIDATE IN PARTY PRIMARY**

38 **SECTION 2.13.(a)** G.S. 163-106.1 reads as rewritten:

39 **"§ 163-106.1. Eligibility to file.**

40 (a) No person shall be permitted to file as a candidate in a party primary unless that person
41 has been affiliated with that party for at least ~~90~~ 365 days as of the date of that person filing such
42 notice of candidacy. A person registered as "unaffiliated" shall be ineligible to file as a candidate
43 in a party primary election.

44 (b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, a person who has been affiliated with
45 a party for less than 365 days may file as a candidate in that party's primary if the State executive
46 committee of the political party with which the candidate is affiliated grants the person a waiver.
47 The State executive committee of the political party may, in its sole discretion, grant or deny a
48 waiver request. The waiver must be submitted to the board of elections which has jurisdiction
49 over the ballot item under G.S. 163-182.4 by the close of the filing period for that office.

50 (c) This section shall not apply to any of the following:
51

1 (1) Candidates selected by party convention or political party caucus.

2 (2) Political parties that have been recognized under Article 9 of this Chapter for
3 two continuous years or less."

4 **SECTION 2.13.(b)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to
5 candidates filing in a party primary on or after that date.

6
7 **PART III. DUTY & STRUCTURE OF THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS &**
8 **COUNTY BOARDS OF ELECTIONS**

9
10 **ROLE OF STATE BOARD AND COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS**

11 **SECTION 3.1.(a)** G.S. 163-19(g) reads as rewritten:

12 "(g) No person while serving on the State Board ~~shall~~shall do any of the following:

13 (1) Make a reportable contribution to a candidate for a public office over which
14 the State Board would have jurisdiction or authority.

15 (2) Register as a lobbyist under Chapter 120C of the General Statutes.

16 (3) Make written or oral statements intended for general ~~distribution~~or
17 distribution, dissemination to the public at ~~large supporting~~ large that are any
18 of the following:

19 a. Supporting or opposing the nomination or election of one or more
20 clearly identified candidates for public office.

21 b. Supporting or opposing any political party over another.

22 c. Encouraging, influencing, or promoting voter turnout for a particular
23 advocacy group, political party, or candidate, or for an election.

24 (4) Make written or oral statements intended for general ~~distribution~~or
25 distribution, dissemination to the public at ~~large~~ large, or targeted to a
26 particular group of persons supporting or opposing the passage of one or more
27 clearly identified referendum or ballot issue proposals.

28 (5) Solicit contributions for a candidate, political committee, or referendum
29 committee.

30 (6) Serve as a member of any other State board, as defined in G.S. 138A-3."

31 **SECTION 3.1.(b)** G.S. 163-30 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

32 "(g) No person while serving on a county board shall do any of the following:

33 (1) Make written or oral statements intended for general distribution,
34 dissemination to the public at large, or targeted to a particular group of persons
35 that are any of the following:

36 a. Supporting or opposing the nomination or election of one or more
37 clearly identified candidates for public office.

38 b. Supporting or opposing any political party over another.

39 c. Encouraging, influencing, or promoting voter turnout for a particular
40 advocacy group, political party, or candidate, or for an election.

41 (2) Make written or oral statements intended for general distribution,
42 dissemination to the public at large, or targeted to a particular group of persons
43 supporting or opposing the passage of one or more clearly identified
44 referendum or ballot issue proposals."

45
46 **AUTHORITY IN ELECTION LITIGATION**

47 **SECTION 3.2.(a)** G.S. 163-25 reads as rewritten:

48 "**§ 163-25. Authority of State Board to assist in litigation.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 **SECTION 3.2.(b)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to
28 counsel employed on, retained on, or hired or retained after that date.
29

30 **VENUE FOR JUDICIAL REVIEW OF DECISIONS OF THE STATE BOARD OF** 31 **ELECTIONS**

32 **SECTION 3.3.(a)** G.S. 163-22(*l*) reads as rewritten:

33 "*l*) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, in order to obtain judicial review of any
34 decision of the State Board rendered in the performance of its duties or in the exercise of its
35 powers under this Chapter, the person seeking review must file a petition in either the Superior
36 Court of Wake County, County or the superior court of the county in which the person seeking
37 review resides."

38 **SECTION 3.3.(b)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to
39 actions filed on or after that date.
40

41 **INCREASE COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS OF COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

42 **SECTION 3.4.(a)** G.S. 163-32 reads as rewritten:

43 **"§ 163-32. Compensation of members of ~~county boards of elections~~ county boards.**

44 In full compensation of their services, members of the county board of ~~elections~~ (including
45 ~~the chairman)~~ chair shall be paid by the county ~~twenty-five dollars (\$25.00)~~ one hundred dollars
46 (\$100.00) per meeting for the time they are actually engaged in the discharge of their duties,
47 together with reimbursement of expenditures necessary and incidental to the discharge of their
48 duties; provided that members are not entitled to be compensated for more than one meeting held
49 in any one 24-hour period. In its discretion, the board of county commissioners of any county
50 may pay the ~~chairman~~ chair and members of the county board of ~~elections~~ compensation in
51 addition to the per meeting and expense allowance provided in this paragraph.

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

5 **SECTION 3.4.(b)** This section becomes effective July 1, 2027.

6
7 **EXEMPT POSITIONS AT THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

8 **SECTION 3.5.(a)** Section 2E.3(a) of S.L. 2025-89 reads as rewritten:

9 "**SECTION 2E.3.(a)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the State Board of
10 Elections the sum of one million one hundred ninety-three thousand nine hundred seventy-nine
11 dollars (\$1,193,979) in recurring funds for each fiscal year of the 2025-2027 fiscal biennium to
12 provide funds for the following ~~seven new exempt~~ positions, including salaries, benefits, and
13 operating costs:

- 14 (1) Administrative Officer III.
- 15 (2) Agency General Counsel II.
- 16 (3) Agency HR Director II.
- 17 (4) Assistant General Counsel II.
- 18 (5) Internal Auditor.
- 19 (6) Legislative Affairs Manager.
- 20 (7) Public Information Manager."

21 **SECTION 3.5.(b)** G.S. 126-5(c1) is amended by adding the following new
22 subdivisions to read:

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

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

33 **SECTION 3.5.(c)** G.S. 126-5(c14) reads as rewritten:

34 "(c14) Notwithstanding any provision of this Chapter to the contrary, each Council of State
35 ~~agency, agency and~~ the Office of the State ~~Controller, and the Executive Director of the State~~
36 ~~Board of Elections-Controller~~ has the sole authority to set the salary of its exempt policymaking
37 and exempt managerial positions within the minimum rates, and the maximum rates plus ten
38 percent (10%), established by the State Human Resources Commission under G.S. 126-4(2)."

39 **SECTION 3.5.(d)** G.S. 126-5(d)(2) reads as rewritten:

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

1 positions is limited to 25 positions or two percent (2%) of the total number of
 2 full-time positions in the department, whichever is greater. The number of
 3 exempt policymaking positions designated by the Superintendent of Public
 4 Instruction is limited to 70 exempt policymaking positions or two percent
 5 (2%) of the total number of full-time positions in the department, whichever
 6 is greater. The number of exempt managerial positions designated by the
 7 Superintendent of Public Instruction is limited to 70 exempt managerial
 8 positions or two percent (2%) of the total number of full-time positions in the
 9 department, whichever is greater. The total number of exempt positions,
 10 policymaking and managerial, designated by the Office of the State Controller
 11 is limited to 10. ~~The total number of exempt positions designated by the~~
 12 ~~Executive Director of the State Board of Elections is limited to the following~~
 13 ~~seven positions: Agency Human Relations Director II, Agency General~~
 14 ~~Counsel II, Assistant General Counsel II, Public Information Manager,~~
 15 ~~Legislative Affairs Manager, Internal Auditor, and Administrative Officer~~
 16 ~~III."~~

17 **SECTION 3.5.(e)** G.S. 126-5(d)(4) reads as rewritten:

18 "(4) Vacancies. – In the event of a vacancy in the Office of Governor, the office of
 19 a member of the Council of State, or the Office of the State Controller, ~~or the~~
 20 ~~Executive Director of the State Board of Elections,~~ the person who succeeds
 21 to or is appointed or elected to fill the unexpired term shall make designations
 22 in a letter to the Director of the Office of State Human Resources, the Speaker
 23 of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate within 180
 24 days after the oath of office is administered to that person."
 25

26 **PART IV. REVISIONS TO UNIFORM MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS ACT**

27 **SECTION 4.1.** G.S. 163-258.2 reads as rewritten:

28 **"§ 163-258.2. Definitions.**

29 As used in this Article:

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

- 31 a. A uniformed-service voter or an overseas voter who is registered to
 32 vote in this State.
- 33 b. A uniformed-service voter defined in subdivision (7) of this section
 34 whose voting residence is in this State and who otherwise satisfies this
 35 State's voter eligibility requirements.
- 36 c. An overseas voter who, before leaving the United States, was last
 37 eligible to vote in this State and, except for a State residency
 38 requirement, otherwise satisfies this State's voter eligibility
 39 requirements.
- 40 d. An overseas voter who, before leaving the United States, would have
 41 been last eligible to vote in this State had the voter then been of voting
 42 age and, except for a State residency requirement, otherwise satisfies
 43 this State's voter eligibility requirements.
- 44 e. ~~An overseas voter who was born outside the United States, is not~~
 45 ~~described in sub-subdivision c. or d. of this subdivision, and, except~~
 46 ~~for a State residency requirement, otherwise satisfies this State's voter~~
 47 ~~eligibility requirements, if:~~
 - 48 1. ~~The last place where a parent or legal guardian of the voter~~
 49 ~~was, or under this Article would have been, eligible to vote~~
 50 ~~before leaving the United States is within this State; and~~

2. ~~The voter has not previously registered to vote in any other state.~~

- (2) "Dependent" means an individual recognized as a dependent by a uniformed service.
- (3) "Military-overseas ballot" means any of the following:
- a. A federal write-in absentee ballot described in the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, section 103, 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-2.
 - b. A ballot specifically prepared or distributed for use by a covered voter in accordance with this Article.
 - c. A ballot cast by a covered voter in accordance with this Article.
- (4) "Overseas voter" means a United States citizen who is outside the United States.
- (5) "State" means a state of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, or any territory or insular possession subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.
- (6) "Uniformed service" means any of the following:
- a. Active and reserve components of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard.
 - b. The Merchant Marine, the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service, and the commissioned corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States.
 - c. The National Guard and state militia units.
- (7) "Uniformed-service voter" means an individual who is qualified to vote and is one of the following:
- a. A member of the active or reserve components of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, or Coast Guard who is on active duty.
 - b. A member of the Merchant Marine, the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service, or the commissioned corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States.
 - c. A member of the National Guard or State militia unit who is on activated status.
 - d. A spouse or dependent of a member referred to in this subdivision.
- (8) "United States," used in the territorial sense, means the several states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, and any territory or insular possession subject to the jurisdiction of the United States."

SECTION 4.2. 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.~~ purposes that is in the same precinct or an adjacent precinct to the address of the last place of residence of the voter."

SECTION 4.3. 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~~

1 the ballot for mailing, electronic transmission, or other authorized means of delivery not later
2 than 12:01 A.M., at the place where the voter completes the ballot, on the date of the election.

3 (b) Covered voters shall submit the military-overseas ballot with a photocopy of
4 identification described in G.S. 163-166.16(a) or an affidavit as described in
5 G.S. 163-166.16(d)(1), (d)(2), or (d)(3).

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

8 **SECTION 4.4.** Article 21A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes is amended by
9 adding a new section to read:

10 **"§ 163-258.21. Curable deficiencies.**

11 (a) If a ballot cast under this Article contains a curable deficiency, the county board shall
12 notify the voter of the curable deficiency and the manner in which the voter may cure the
13 deficiency no later than the close of business on the next business day following review of the
14 ballot. For purposes of this section, a curable deficiency is when the voter fails to include a
15 photocopy of identification described in G.S. 163-258.10(b).

16 (b) Any ballot cast under this Article with a curable deficiency that is transmitted to the
17 county board shall be considered timely if cure documentation is received by 11:00 A.M. on the
18 day of the county canvass. Cure documentation may be transmitted through any of the following
19 methods:

20 (1) Mailing cure documentation to the appropriate county board.

21 (2) Transmitting cure documentation to the appropriate county board through the
22 electronic transmission system developed by the State Board.

23 (3) Transmitting cure documentation via email to the appropriate county board."

24 **SECTION 4.5.** This Part becomes effective January 1, 2027, and applies to elections
25 held on or after that date.

26 **PART V. CAMPAIGN FINANCE REVISIONS**

27 **INCREASE THRESHOLD FOR REPORTING CERTAIN CONTRIBUTIONS**

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

29 **"§ 163-278.10A. Threshold of ~~\$1,000~~ \$3,000 for financial reports for certain candidates.**

30 (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Chapter, a candidate for a county office,
31 municipal office, local school board office, soil and water conservation district board of
32 supervisors, or sanitary district board shall be exempted from the reports of contributions, loans,
33 and expenditures required in G.S. 163-278.9(a), 163-278.40B, 163-278.40C, 163-278.40D, and
34 163-278.40E if to further the candidate's campaign that ~~candidate~~ candidate complies with all of
35 the following:

36 (1) Does not receive more than ~~one thousand dollars (\$1,000)~~ three thousand
37 dollars (\$3,000) in ~~contributions, and~~ contributions.

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

40 (3) Does not spend more than ~~one thousand dollars (\$1,000)~~ three thousand
41 dollars (\$3,000).

42 To qualify for the exemption from those reports, the candidate's treasurer shall file a certification
43 that the candidate does not intend to receive in contributions or loans or expend more than ~~one~~
44 ~~thousand dollars (\$1,000)~~ three thousand dollars (\$3,000) to further the candidate's campaign.
45 The certification shall be filed with the Board at the same time the candidate files the candidate's
46 Organizational Report as required in G.S. 163-278.7, G.S. 163-278.9, and G.S. 163-278.40A. If
47 the candidate's campaign is being conducted by a political committee which is handling all
48 contributions, loans, and expenditures for the candidate's campaign, the treasurer of the political
49 committee shall file a certification of intent to stay within the threshold amount. If the intent to
50
51

1 stay within the threshold changes, or if the ~~one thousand dollar (\$1,000)~~ three thousand dollar
 2 (\$3,000) threshold is exceeded, the treasurer shall immediately notify the Board and shall be
 3 responsible for filing all reports required in G.S. 163-278.9 and 163-278.40B, 163-278.40C,
 4 163-278.40D, and 163-278.40E; provided that any contribution, loan, or expenditure which
 5 would have been required to be reported on an earlier report but for this section shall be included
 6 on the next report required after the intent changes or the threshold is exceeded.

7"

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

9 **"§ 163-278.12. Special reporting of contributions and independent expenditures.**

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

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

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

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

32 ...

33 (h) Statements filed under this section in connection with an independent expenditure or
 34 contribution regarding a referendum shall include a certification by the filer that it has not
 35 knowingly or willfully accepted funds aggregating in excess of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000)
 36 from one or more foreign nationals within the four-year period immediately preceding the date
 37 on which the expenditure or contribution was made and that it will not do so through the date of
 38 the election in which the referendum will appear on the ballot."

39 **SECTION 5.1.(c)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2027.

40 **48-HOUR REPORT REQUIREMENTS**

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

42 **"§ 163-278.9. Statements filed with Board.**

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

46 ...

47 (2) 48-Hour Report. – A political committee, political party or affiliated party
 48 committee that receives a contribution or transfer of funds shall disclose
 49 within 48 hours of receipt a contribution or transfer of ~~one two thousand~~
 50 dollars (\$1,000) (\$2,000) or more received before an election but after the
 51

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

12 ...

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

16"

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

18 "(3) 48-Hour Report. – A referendum committee that receives a contribution or
 19 transfer of funds shall disclose within 48 hours of receipt a contribution or
 20 transfer of ~~one two thousand dollars (\$1,000)-(\$2,000)~~ or more received before
 21 a referendum but after the period covered by the last report due before that
 22 referendum. The disclosure shall be by report to the ~~State Board of Elections~~
 23 identifying the source and amount of such funds. The ~~State Board of Elections~~
 24 shall specify the form and manner of making the report, including the
 25 reporting of in-kind contributions. The State Board shall increase the dollar
 26 amount of the reporting threshold effective each election cycle beginning the
 27 period from January 1 of an odd-numbered year through December 31 of the
 28 next even-numbered year based on the Consumer Price Index as provided in
 29 G.S. 163-278.13(b). The State Board shall set the revised threshold in October
 30 of the even-numbered year, publish the revised threshold in the North Carolina
 31 Register, and notify the Revisor of Statutes who shall adjust the dollar amount
 32 in this subdivision."

33 **SECTION 5.2.(c)** No earlier than October 1, 2026, the State Board of Elections shall
 34 adjust the thresholds imposed by G.S. 163-278.9(a)(2) and G.S. 163-278.9A(a)(3), as enacted by
 35 this section, effective for the election cycle beginning January 1, 2027.

37 CONTRIBUTIONS BY FOREIGN NATIONALS

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

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

- 40 a. An individual who is not a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the
 41 United States.
- 42 b. A government of a foreign country, or any political subdivision
 43 thereof.
- 44 c. A foreign political party.
- 45 d. Any person that is organized under the law of, or has its principal place
 46 of business in, a foreign country.
- 47 e. Any person organized and operating in the United States that is wholly
 48 or majority-owned by a foreign national or combination of foreign
 49 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 and that the committee has not and will not knowingly or willfully receive, solicit, or accept contributions, directly or indirectly, from 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 donor associated with each contribution is not a foreign national and the donor has not knowingly or willfully received, solicited, or accepted contributions, directly or indirectly, from one or more foreign nationals aggregating in excess of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) within the four-year period immediately preceding the date of the contribution.

(d) For purposes of this section, "directly or indirectly" means acting either alone or jointly with, through, or on behalf of any other referendum committee, political committee, organization, person, individual, or other entity."

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 any Carolina.
- (2) 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.

- 1 (2) To pay or use or offer, consent or agree to pay or use any of its money or
2 property for any contribution to a candidate or political committee.
3 (3) To compensate, reimburse, or indemnify any person or individual for money
4 or property so used or for any contribution or expenditure so made.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 34 (1) Has as an express purpose promoting social, educational, or political ideas and
35 not to generate business ~~income;~~income.
- 36 (2) Does not have shareholders or other persons which have an economic interest
37 in its assets and ~~earnings;~~and earnings.
- 38 (3) Was not established by a business corporation, by an insurance company, by
39 a business entity, including, but not limited to, those chartered under Chapter
40 55, Chapter 55A, Chapter 55B, or Chapter 58 of the General Statutes, by a
41 professional association, or by a labor union and does not receive substantial
42 revenue from such entities. Substantial revenue is rebuttably presumed to be
43 more than ten percent (10%) of total revenues in a calendar year.
- 44 (4) Is not a foreign national.

45 (i) If a political committee has as its only purpose accepting contributions and making
46 expenditures to influence elections, and that political committee incorporates as a nonprofit
47 corporation to shield its participants from liability created outside this Subchapter, that political
48 committee is not considered to be a corporation for purposes of this section. Incorporation of a
49 political committee does not relieve any individual, person, or other entity of any liability, duty,
50 or obligation created pursuant to any provision of this Subchapter. To obtain the benefits of this
51 subsection, an incorporating political committee must state exactly the following language as the

1 only purpose for which the corporation can be organized: "to accept contributions and make
2 expenditures to influence elections as a political committee pursuant to G.S. 163-278.6(74)
3 only." No political committee shall do business as a political committee after incorporation unless
4 it has been certified by the State Board as being in compliance with this subsection.

5 (j) For purposes of this section, "directly or indirectly" means acting either alone or
6 jointly with, through, or on behalf of any other referendum committee, political committee,
7 organization, person, individual, or other entity."

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

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

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

17 **"§ 163-278.19C. Contributions by foreign nationals.**

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

23 (b) A foreign national may not solicit, directly or indirectly, the making of a contribution,
24 expenditure, or other monetary or in-kind donation by another individual or person to influence
25 a referendum.

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

28 (d) Upon a referendum committee receiving a contribution, the treasurer of such
29 committee shall obtain from the donor an affirmation that the donor is not a foreign national and
30 the donor has not knowingly or willfully accepted funds aggregating in excess of ten thousand
31 dollars (\$10,000) from one or more foreign national within the four-year period immediately
32 preceding the date the contribution is made. The treasurer of a referendum committee shall
33 include records of such donor affirmations in the detailed account records required by
34 G.S. 163-278.8.

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

38 (f) Nothing in this section shall create or eliminate any donor disclosure rights or duties
39 except as provided in this Chapter.

40 (g) Any individual or person who makes an intentional disclosure of confidential
41 materials or information related to any investigation or enforcement action under this section
42 when such disclosure is not authorized by this Chapter shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.
43 The statute of limitations, as stated in G.S. 15-1, for a violation of this subsection shall run from
44 the date that the unauthorized disclosure first occurred.

45 (h) For purposes of this section, "directly or indirectly" means acting either alone or
46 jointly with, through, or on behalf of any other referendum committee, political committee,
47 organization, person, individual, or other entity."

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

49 **"§ 163-278.19A. Contributions allowed.**

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

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

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

13 **SECTION 5.3.(i)** Subsection (f) of this section becomes effective December 1, 2026,
14 and applies to offenses committed on or after that date. The remainder of this section becomes
15 effective January 1, 2027.

16 17 **EXEMPT POLITICAL PARTY COMMITTEES FROM CAMPAIGN SALES** 18 **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

19 **SECTION 5.4.(a)** G.S. 163-278.8A reads as rewritten:

20 **"§ 163-278.8A. Campaign sales by political party executive ~~committees~~committees, and**
21 **affiliated party committees, and other political party committees.**

22 (a) Exempt Purchase Price Not Treated as "Contribution." – Notwithstanding the
23 provisions of G.S. 163-278.6(13), the purchase price of goods or services sold by a political party
24 executive ~~committee or affiliated party committee~~ committee, an affiliated party committee, or
25 other political party committees as provided in subsection (b) of this section shall not be treated
26 as a "contribution" for purposes of account-keeping under G.S. 163-278.8, for purposes of the
27 reporting of contributions under G.S. 163-278.11, or for the purpose of the limit on contributions
28 under G.S. 163-278.13. The treasurer is not required to obtain, maintain, or report the name or
29 other identifying information of the purchaser of the goods or services, as long as the
30 requirements of subsection (b) of this section are satisfied. However, the proceeds from the sales
31 of those goods and services shall be treated as contributions for other purposes, and expenditures
32 of those proceeds shall be reported as expenditures under this Article. For purposes of this
33 section, "political party committees" includes, but is not limited to, men, women, college, teen,
34 senior, young, African American, or Hispanic clubs or organizations.

35 (b) Exempt Purchase Price. – A purchase price for goods or services sold by a political
36 party executive ~~committee or affiliated party committee~~ committee, an affiliated party
37 committee, or other political party committees qualifies for the exemption provided in subsection
38 (a) of this section as long as the sale of the goods or services adheres to a plan that the treasurer
39 has submitted to and that has been approved in writing by the Executive Director of the State
40 Board of Elections. The Executive Director shall approve the treasurer's plan upon and only upon
41 finding that all the following requirements are satisfied:

- 42 (1) That the price to be charged for the goods or services is reasonably close to
43 the market price for the goods or services.
- 44 (2) That the total amount to be raised from sales under all plans by the committee
45 does not exceed twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) per election cycle.
- 46 (3) That no purchaser makes total purchases under the plan that exceed fifty
47 dollars (\$50.00).
- 48 (4) That the treasurer include in the report under G.S. 163-278.11, covering the
49 relevant time period, all of the following:
 - 50 a. A description of the plan.
 - 51 b. The amount raised from sales under the plan.

- 1 c. The number of purchases made.
2 (5) That the treasurer shall include in the appropriate report under
3 G.S. 163-278.11 any in-kind contribution made to the political party in
4 providing the goods or services sold under the plan and that no in-kind
5 contribution accepted as part of the plan violates any provision of this Article.

6 The Executive Director may require a format for submission of a plan, but that format shall
7 not place undue paperwork burdens upon the treasurer. As used in this subdivision, the term
8 "election cycle" has the same meaning as in G.S. 163-278.6(32)."

9 **SECTION 5.4.(b)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2027.

10 11 **INCREASE THRESHOLD FOR NONCASH REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

12 **SECTION 5.5.(a)** G.S. 163-278.8(d) reads as rewritten:

13 "(d) All expenditures for nonmedia expenses (except postage) of more than ~~fifty dollars~~
14 ~~(\$50.00)~~ one hundred dollars (\$100.00) shall be made by a verifiable form of payment. The State
15 Board of Elections shall prescribe methods to ensure an audit trail for every expenditure so that
16 the identity of each payee can be determined. All expenditures for nonmedia expenses of ~~fifty~~
17 ~~dollars (\$50.00)~~ one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or less may be made by check or by cash payment.
18 All nonmedia expenditures of more than ~~fifty dollars (\$50.00)~~ one hundred dollars (\$100.00)
19 shall be accounted for and reported individually and separately with a specific description to
20 provide a reasonable understanding of the expenditure, but expenditures of ~~fifty dollars (\$50.00)~~
21 one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or less may be accounted for and reported in an aggregated
22 amount, but in that case the treasurer shall account for and report that the treasurer made
23 expenditures of ~~fifty dollars (\$50.00)~~ one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or less each, the amounts,
24 dates, and the purposes for which made. In the case of a nonmedia expenditure required to be
25 accounted for individually and separately with a specific description to provide a reasonable
26 understanding of the expenditure by this subsection, if the expenditure was to an individual, the
27 report shall list the name and address of the individual."

28 **SECTION 5.5.(b)** G.S. 163-278.11(b) reads as rewritten:

29 "(b) Threshold for Reporting Identity of Contributor. – A treasurer shall not be required
30 to report the name, address, or principal occupation of any individual who contributes ~~fifty dollars~~
31 ~~(\$50.00)~~ one hundred dollars (\$100.00) or less to the treasurer's committee during an election as
32 defined in G.S. 163-278.13. The State Board of Elections shall provide on its reporting forms for
33 the reporting of contributions below that threshold. On those reporting forms, the State Board
34 may require date and amount of contributions below the threshold, but may treat differently for
35 reporting purposes contributions below the threshold that are made in different modes and in
36 different settings."

37 **SECTION 5.5.(c)** G.S. 163-278.14(b) reads as rewritten:

38 "(b) No entity shall make, and no candidate, committee or treasurer shall accept, any
39 monetary contribution in excess of ~~fifty dollars (\$50.00)~~ one hundred dollars (\$100.00) unless
40 such contribution is in the form of a check, draft, money order, credit card charge, debit, or other
41 noncash method that can be subject to written verification. No contribution in the form of check,
42 draft, money order, credit card charge, debits, or other noncash method may be made or accepted
43 unless it contains a specific designation of the intended contributee chosen by the contributor.
44 The State Board may prescribe guidelines as to the reporting and verification of any method of
45 contribution payment allowed under this Article. For contributions by money order, the State
46 Board of Elections shall prescribe methods to ensure an audit trail for every contribution so that
47 the identity of the contributor can be determined. For a contribution made by credit card, the
48 credit card account number of a contributor is not a public record."

49 **SECTION 5.5.(d)** This section becomes effective January 1, 2027, and applies to
50 monetary contributions and expenditures made, reported, or accepted on or after that date.
51

1 **PART VI. REQUIRE USE OF FEDERAL DECENNIAL CENSUS DATA WHEN**
2 **ESTABLISHING DISTRICT BOUNDARIES**

3 **SECTION 6.(a)** G.S. 153A-22 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

4 "(h) In establishing district boundaries, the board of commissioners shall use data derived
5 from the most recent federal decennial census and shall not use any other population estimates."

6 **SECTION 6.(b)** G.S. 160A-23 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

7 "**§ 160A-23. District map; reapportionment.**

8 (a) If the city is divided into electoral districts for the purpose of electing the members of
9 the council, the map or description required by G.S. 160A-22 shall also show the boundaries of
10 the several districts.

11 (b) The council shall have authority to revise electoral district boundaries from time to
12 time. If district boundaries are set out in the city charter and the charter does not provide a method
13 for revising them, the council may revise them only for the purpose of (i) accounting for territory
14 annexed to or excluded from the city, and (ii) correcting population imbalances among the
15 districts shown by a new federal decennial census or caused by exclusions or annexations. When
16 district boundaries have been established in conformity with the federal Constitution, the council
17 shall not be required to revise them again until a new federal decennial census ~~of population~~ is
18 taken or territory is annexed to or excluded from the city, whichever event first occurs.

19 (c) In establishing district boundaries, the council ~~may shall~~ use data derived from the
20 most recent federal decennial census and shall not ~~be required to~~ use any other population
21 estimates."

22 **SECTION 6.(c)** G.S. 115C-37(i) reads as rewritten:

23 "(i) The local board of education shall revise electoral district boundaries from time to
24 time as provided by this subsection. If district boundaries are set by local act or court order and
25 the act or order does not provide a method for revising them, the local board of education shall
26 revise them only for the purpose of (i) accounting for territory annexed to or excluded from the
27 school administrative unit, and (ii) correcting population imbalances among the districts shown
28 by a new federal decennial census or caused by exclusions or annexations. After the General
29 Assembly has ratified an act establishing district boundaries, the local board of education shall
30 not revise them again until a new federal decennial census of population is taken or territory is
31 annexed to or excluded from the school administrative unit, whichever event first occurs. After
32 the local board of education has revised district boundaries in conformity with this ~~act,~~
33 subsection, the local board of education shall not revise them again until a new federal decennial
34 census of population is taken or territory is annexed to or excluded from the school administrative
35 unit, whichever event occurs first, except that the board may make an earlier revision of district
36 boundaries it has drawn if it must do so to comply with a court order or to gain approval of a
37 district-revision plan by the U.S. Justice Department under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.
38 In establishing district boundaries, the local board of education shall use data derived from the
39 most recent federal ~~census.~~ decennial census and shall not use any other population estimates."

40 **SECTION 6.(d)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to the
41 establishment of district boundaries by a county, city, or local board of education on or after that
42 date.

43
44 **PART VII. SIGNATURE VERIFICATION STUDY**

45 **SECTION 7.(a)** The State Board of Elections shall study and report on the
46 feasibility, costs, and technical considerations of using signature verification technology. The
47 State Board of Elections may seek feedback from other stakeholders, including the county boards
48 of elections, and the study shall evaluate all of the following:

- 49 (1) The use of signature verification software in other states for the purposes of
50 voter registration, absentee ballot signatures, and other uses in elections
51 administration. This may include information about error rates in other states

1 across potential vendors, any discontinuation of vendor contracts in other
2 states, and any cost-saving measures implemented by other states.

3 (2) The cost and logistics of implementing a signature verification component for
4 absentee ballot verification, including any training requirements, equipment
5 needs, or costs incurred by county boards of elections.

6 (3) Any foreseen challenges related to voter signature retention under the current
7 elections management infrastructure and possible technology solutions to
8 minimize error rates under a statewide signature verification program.

9 **SECTION 7.(b)** The State Board of Elections shall report its findings, including any
10 recommendations or proposed legislation, to the Joint Legislative Elections Oversight Committee
11 on or before May 1, 2027.

12 **PART VIII. TRAINING FOR COUNTY BOARDS OF ELECTIONS**

13 **SECTION 8.1.** The School of Government at the University of North Carolina at
14 Chapel Hill shall work jointly with the State Board of Elections to develop a uniform curriculum
15 to provide trainings for county directors of elections and employees of county boards of elections
16 on the election laws and procedures as provided for in Chapter 163 of the General Statutes.

17 **SECTION 8.2.** The State Board of Elections shall partner with local community
18 colleges to provide a location in which any training conducted by the State Board of Elections or
19 a county board of elections may be held.

20 **PART IX. SEVERABILITY CLAUSE**

21 **SECTION 9.** If any provision of this act or its application to any person, group of
22 persons, or circumstances is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect other provisions or
23 applications of this act that can be given effect without the invalid provisions or application and,
24 to this end, the provisions of this act are severable.

25 **PART X. EFFECTIVE DATE**

26 **SECTION 10.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes
27 law.
28
29
30