

1 H.474

2 Introduced by Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs

3 Date:

4 Subject: Elections; ranked-choice voting; nominations; electronic ballot return;  
5 write-in candidates; campaign finance; recounts

6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the  
7 Secretary of State to report on the feasibility of permanently instituting  
8 ranked-choice voting for presidential primary elections. It proposes to prohibit  
9 a major political party from nominating a candidate for a general election if  
10 that party failed to nominate a candidate during the primary election. This bill  
11 proposes to prohibit a candidate who loses a major party primary for any office  
12 from appearing on the general election ballot for the same office for which the  
13 candidate lost in the primary election as an independent candidate or  
14 representing any other party. It proposes to require the Secretary of State to  
15 report on the feasibility of permitting electronic ballot return for voters who  
16 are ill, injured, or have a disability; military and overseas voters; and voters  
17 who participate in the Secretary of State's Address Confidentiality Program.  
18 This bill proposes to permit candidates to provide additional demographic  
19 information. It proposes to require write-in candidates to file consent of  
20 candidacy forms in advance of an election and to increase the minimum  
21 thresholds for write-in candidates in primary elections. This bill proposes to

1 make various modifications to campaign finance reporting and requirements.  
2 It proposes to require town clerks and boards of civil authority to perform  
3 audits to voter checklists for Representative districts and Senatorial districts  
4 that split municipal boundaries. This bill proposes to, in the event of a  
5 contested election and recount, require candidates to nominate disinterested  
6 parties to a recount committee and prohibit the Superior Court from appointing  
7 nominees to the recount committee if they are an interested party. It also  
8 proposes to modify deadlines for various State and local election procedures.

9 An act relating to miscellaneous changes to election law

10 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

11 \* \* \* Ranked-Choice Voting Report \* \* \*

12 Sec. 1. REPORT

13 On or before January 15, 2026, the Secretary of State shall submit a written  
14 report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military  
15 Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations regarding the  
16 feasibility and associated costs of permanently instituting ranked-choice voting  
17 for presidential primary elections in the State.

1 ~~Sec. 2. 17 V.S.A. § 2381 is amended to read:~~

2 § 2381. APPLICABILITY OF SUBCHAPTER

3 (a) A candidate may also be nominated and have the candidate's name  
4 printed on the general election ballot in accordance with the provisions set  
5 forth in this subchapter in the following instances:

6 (1) ~~In~~ in case of a vacancy on the general election ballot occasioned by  
7 death, removal, or withdrawal of a candidate, ~~or~~ but not for the failure of a  
8 major political party to nominate a candidate by primary;

9 (2) ~~In~~ in case a minor political party desires to nominate a candidate for  
10 any office for which major political parties nominate candidates by primary or  
11 for the offices of President and Vice President of the United States; and

12 (3) ~~In~~ in case of nomination for the office of justice of the peace, in the  
13 event that such nomination has not already been made by caucus as provided  
14 in section 2413 of this chapter.

15 ~~Sec. 2. [Deleted.]~~

16 ~~Sec. 3. 17 V.S.A. § 2386 is amended to read:~~

17 § 2386. TIME FOR FILING STATEMENTS

18 (a) ~~In the case of the failure of a major political party to nominate a~~  
19 ~~candidate by primary, a statement shall be filed not later than 5:00 p.m. on the~~  
20 ~~sixth day following the primary. [Repealed.]~~

1

*Sec. 3. [Deleted.]*

2

\* \* \* One-Bite Candidacy \* \* \*

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Sec. 4. 17 V.S.A. § 2381 is amended to read:

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§ 2381. APPLICABILITY OF SUBCHAPTER

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\* \* \*

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(c) In no event shall a candidate who loses a major party primary be

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nominated to appear on the general election ballot pursuant to this subchapter

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by a committee of any party other than the party for which the candidate

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appeared on the primary ballot.

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Sec. 5. 17 V.S.A. § 2401 is amended to read:

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§ 2401. APPLICABILITY OF SUBCHAPTER

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(a) A person may be nominated and have his or her the person's name

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printed on the general election ballot for any office by filing a consent similar

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in form to the consent prescribed by section 2361 of this title and a statement

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of nomination with the Secretary of State. In the case of a nomination for

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justice of the peace, the consent form and statement of nomination shall be

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filed with the town clerk.

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(b) A candidate who loses a major party primary for any office shall not

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appear on the general election ballot as an independent candidate for the same

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office for which the candidate lost in the primary election.

\* \* \* Electronic Ballot Returns Report and Miscellaneous Changes to  
Electronic Ballot Delivery Law \* \* \*

Sec. 6. REPORT

On or before November 15, 2026, the Secretary of State shall submit a  
written report to the House Committee on Government Operations and  
Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations  
regarding the feasibility and associated costs of permitting electronic ballot  
return for voters who are ill, injured, or have a disability; military and overseas  
voters; and voters who participate in the Secretary of State's Address  
Confidentiality Program.

Sec. 7. 17 V.S.A. § 2539 is amended to read:

§ 2539. DELIVERY OF EARLY VOTER ABSENTEE BALLOTS

\* \* \*

(c) Military or overseas voters.

(1) Early voter absentee ballots for military or overseas voters shall be  
sent air mail, first class, postpaid when such service is available, or they may  
be electronically delivered when requested by the voter.

(2)(A) The town clerk's office shall be open on the 46th day before any  
election that includes a federal office and the town clerk shall send on or  
before that day all absentee ballots to any military or overseas voter who  
requested an early voter absentee ballot on or before that day.

1 (B) On that day the town clerk shall complete any reporting  
2 requirements and any other responsibilities regarding the mailing of early  
3 voter absentee ballots to military or overseas voters, as directed by the  
4 Secretary of State.

5 (3) As used in this section, “overseas voters” means a person who was  
6 last domiciled in Vermont before leaving the United States and now resides  
7 outside the United States.

8 (d) Voters who participate in the Secretary of State’s Address  
9 Confidentiality Program. In the case of persons who participate in the address  
10 confidentiality program administered by the Secretary of State set forth in 15  
11 V.S.A. § 1152, if the voter or authorized person requests in the application or  
12 otherwise that early voter absentee ballots be mailed or electronically  
13 delivered, the town clerk shall mail or electronically deliver the ballots.

14 \* \* \* Candidate Demographic Information \* \* \*

15 Sec. 8. 17 V.S.A. § 2665 is amended to read:

16 § 2665. NOTIFICATION TO SECRETARY OF STATE

17 (a) The town clerk shall file with the Secretary of State a list of ~~the names~~  
18 ~~and addresses of the selectboard members elected and~~ candidates that includes  
19 the candidates’ street addresses, email addresses, sought office, and the end  
20 date of the term of office of each selectboard member, city councilor, village

1 trustee, and mayor elected. The town clerk shall notify the Secretary of State  
2 of any changes in the list as filed.

3 (b) A candidate may voluntarily provide information about the candidate's  
4 gender, age, or race or ethnicity in the format provided by the Secretary of  
5 State. A candidate who does not provide information pertaining to gender,  
6 age, or race or ethnicity may still appear on the ballot if all other requirements  
7 are met.

8 (c) Information about a candidate's gender, age, or race or ethnicity  
9 collected pursuant to this subsection is exempt from public inspection and  
10 copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept confidential, except  
11 that the Secretary of State may publish information pertaining to candidates'  
12 gender, age, or race or ethnicity in aggregate form.

13 \* \* \* Write-in Candidate Registration and Minimum Thresholds in Primary  
14 Elections \* \* \*

15 ~~Sec. 9-17 V.S.A. § 2370 is amended to read:~~

16 ~~§ 2370. WRITE-IN CANDIDATES~~

17 ~~(a) In order to have votes listed for a write-in candidate under subdivision~~  
18 ~~2587(e)(3) of this title, not later than 5:00 p.m. on the second Friday preceding~~  
19 ~~the primary election, a write-in candidate for the General Assembly, any~~  
20 ~~county office, any State office, or any federal office shall file with the~~  
21 ~~Secretary of State a form consenting to candidacy for office as set forth in~~

1 ~~subsection 2587(e) of this title. The Secretary of State shall notify the town~~  
2 ~~clerks of any filings made in accordance with this subsection not later than the~~  
3 ~~Friday before the election.~~

4 (b) A write-in candidate shall not qualify as a primary winner unless he or  
5 she ~~the candidate~~ receives at least one-half the same number of votes as the  
6 number of signatures required for his or her the candidate's office on a  
7 primary petition, except that if a write-in candidate receives more votes than a  
8 candidate whose name is printed on the ballot, ~~he or she may~~ the write-in  
9 candidate shall qualify as a primary winner.

10 ~~(b)(c)~~ The write-in candidate who qualifies as a primary winner under this  
11 section must still be determined a winner under section 2369 of this chapter  
12 before ~~he or she~~ the candidate becomes the party's candidate in the general  
13 ~~election.~~

*Sec. 9. 17 V.S.A. § 2370 is amended to read:*

*§ 2370. WRITE-IN CANDIDATES*

*(a) In order to have votes listed for a write-in candidate under subdivision 2587 of this title, not later than 7:00 p.m. on the day of the primary election, a write-in candidate for the General Assembly, any State office, or any federal office shall complete a form of the Secretary of State's design affirming that the candidate wants to have received votes listed under subdivision 2587(e)(3) of this title. The candidate shall file the form with either all town clerks within*



the candidate's applicable district or the Secretary of State's Office in an electronic manner approved by the Secretary. The Secretary of State shall notify the appropriate town clerks of any filings made in accordance with this subsection as soon as practicable.

(b) A write-in candidate shall not qualify as a primary winner unless ~~he or she~~ the candidate receives at least one-half the same number of votes as the number of signatures required for his or her the candidate's office on a primary petition, except that if a write-in candidate receives more votes than a candidate whose name is printed on the ballot, ~~he or she may~~ the write-in candidate shall qualify as a primary winner. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, a candidate who has not filed in accordance with subsection (a) shall qualify as a primary winner if the candidate otherwise complies with the provisions of this subsection.

(b)(c) The write-in candidate who qualifies as a primary winner under this section must still be determined a winner under section 2369 of this chapter before ~~he or she~~ the candidate becomes the party's candidate in the general election.

1 ~~Sec. 10-17 V.S.A. § 2472 is amended to read:~~

2 § 2472. CONTENTS

3

1 ~~(b)(1) Each office to be voted upon shall be separately indicated and~~  
2 preceded by the word “For,” as: “For United States Senator.” Beneath the  
3 office to be voted upon shall appear the instructions: “Vote for not more than  
4 (the number of candidates to be elected).”

5 \* \* \*

6 (6) In order to have votes listed for a write-in candidate under  
7 subdivision 2587(e)(3) of this title, not later than 5:00 p.m. on the second  
8 Friday preceding the general election, a write-in candidate for the General  
9 Assembly, any county office, any State office, or any federal office shall file  
10 with the Secretary of State a form consenting to candidacy for office as set  
11 forth in subsection 2587(e) of this title. The Secretary of State shall notify the  
12 town clerks of any filings made in accordance with this subsection not later  
13 than the Friday before the election.

14 *Sec. 10. 17 V.S.A. § 2472 is amended to read:*

*§ 2472. CONTENTS*

\* \* \*

*(b)(1) Each office to be voted upon shall be separately indicated and  
preceded by the word “For,” as: “For United States Senator.” Beneath the  
office to be voted upon shall appear the instructions: “Vote for not more than  
(the number of candidates to be elected).”*

\* \* \*

(5)(A) In order to have votes listed for a write-in candidate under subdivision 2587 of this title, not later than 7:00 p.m. on the day of the primary election, a write-in candidate for the General Assembly, any State office, or any federal office shall complete a form of the Secretary of State's design affirming that the candidate wants to have received votes listed under subdivision 2587(e)(3) of this title. The candidate shall file the form with either all town clerks within the candidate's applicable district or the Secretary of State's Office in an electronic manner approved by the Secretary. The Secretary of State shall notify the appropriate town clerks of any filings made in accordance with this subsection as soon as practicable.

(B) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (A) of this subdivision (5), a candidate who has not filed in accordance with subdivision (A) shall qualify as the winner of an election if the candidate otherwise complies with the provisions of this chapter.

\* \* \*

1 ~~Sec. 11-17 V.S.A. § 2587 is amended to read:~~

2 ~~§ 2587. RULES FOR COUNTING VOTES~~

3 ~~\* \* \*~~

4 ~~(e)(1) In the case of "write-in" votes, the act of writing in the name of a~~  
5 ~~candidate, or pasting a label containing a candidate's name upon the ballot,~~

1 ~~without other indications of the voter's intent, shall constitute a vote for that~~  
2 candidate, even though the voter did not fill in the square or oval after the  
3 name.

4 (2)(A) A vote for a write-in candidate shall be counted as a write-in vote  
5 that is without consent of candidate unless the write-in candidate filed a  
6 consent of candidate form with the Secretary of State in accordance with  
7 section 2370 of this title in the primary election, subsection 2472(b) of this  
8 title for the general election, and subsection 2703(f) of this title for the  
9 presidential primary. The consent form shall set forth the name of the  
10 candidate, the name of the office for which the candidate consents to be a  
11 candidate, the candidate's town of residence, and the candidate's correct  
12 mailing address. The clerk shall record the name and vote totals of a write-in  
13 candidate who has filed in accordance with section 2370 of this title in the  
14 primary election, subsection 2472(b) of this title for the general election, and  
15 subsection 2703(f) of this title for the presidential primary.

16 (B) The Secretary of State shall prepare and furnish forms for  
17 candidate consent purposes.

18 (3) The election officials counting ballots and tallying results shall only  
19 list every person who receives a "write-in" vote and the number of votes  
20 received the names and votes received of those write-in candidates who  
21 consented to candidacy for the office pursuant to section 2370 of this title in

1 ~~the primary election, subsection 2472(b) of this title for the general election~~  
2 and subsection 2703(f) of this title for the presidential primary. Any write-in  
3 votes for candidates who have not consented to the write-in candidacy shall be  
4 listed as “other write-ins.”

5 (A) On each tally sheet, the counters shall add together the names of  
6 candidates that are clearly the same person, even though a nickname or last  
7 name is used.

8 (B) Names of ~~fictitious or deceased~~ persons who are not registered  
9 write-in candidates shall not be listed individually and shall be recorded on the  
10 tally sheet as a blank vote in the aggregate as “other write-ins.”

11 (f) When the same number of persons are nominated for the position of  
12 justice of the peace as there are positions to be filled, the presiding officer may  
13 declare the whole slate of candidates elected without making individual tallies,  
14 providing each person on the slate has more votes than the largest number of  
15 ~~write-in votes for any one registered write-in candidate.~~

*Sec. 11. 17 V.S.A. § 2587 is amended to read:*

*§ 2587. RULES FOR COUNTING VOTES*

\* \* \*

*(e)(1) In the case of “write-in” votes, the act of writing in the name of a  
candidate, or pasting a label containing a candidate’s name upon the ballot,  
without other indications of the voter’s intent, shall constitute a vote for that*

*candidate, even though the voter did not fill in the square or oval after the name.*

*(2) A vote for a write-in candidate shall be counted as a write-in vote that is without requisite filings unless the write-in candidate filed in accordance with section 2370, 2472, or 2702 of this title. The clerk shall record the name and vote totals of a write-in candidate who has complied with this section.*

*(3)(A) The election officials counting ballots and tallying results shall list every person who receives a “write-in” vote and the number of votes received only the names and votes received of those write-in candidates who filed in accordance with section 2370, 2472, or 2702 of this title. Any write-in votes for candidates who have not filed in accordance with section 2370, 2472, or 2702 of this title shall be listed as “other write-ins.”*

*(4)(B) On each tally sheet, the counters shall add together the names of candidates that are clearly the same person, even though a nickname or last name is used.*

*(B)(C) Names of fictitious or deceased persons who have not filed in accordance with section 2370, 2472, or 2702 of this title shall not be listed individually and shall be recorded on the tally sheet as a blank vote in aggregate as “other write-ins.”*

*(f) When the same number of persons are nominated for the position of justice of the peace as there are positions to be filled, the presiding officer may declare the whole slate of candidates elected without making individual tallies, providing each person on the slate has more votes than the largest number of write-in votes for any one registered write-in candidate.*

1 ~~Sec. 12-17 V.S.A. § 2702 is amended to read:~~

2 ~~§ 2702. NOMINATING PETITION~~

3 ~~(a) The name of any person shall be printed upon the primary ballot as a~~  
4 ~~candidate for nomination by any major political party if petitions signed by at~~  
5 ~~least 1,000 voters in accordance with sections 2353, 2354, and 2358 of this~~  
6 ~~title are filed with the Secretary of State, together with the written consent of~~  
7 ~~the person to the printing of the person's name on the ballot.~~

8 ~~(b) Petitions shall be filed not later than 5:00 p.m. on the 15th day of~~  
9 ~~December preceding the primary election.~~

10 ~~(c) The petition shall be in a form prescribed by the Secretary of State.~~

11 ~~(d) A person's name shall not be listed as a candidate on the primary ballot~~  
12 ~~of more than one party in the same election.~~

13 ~~(e) Each petition shall be accompanied by a filing fee of \$2,000.00 to be~~  
14 ~~paid to the Secretary of State. However, if the petition of a candidate is~~  
15 ~~accompanied by the affidavit of the candidate, which shall be available for~~  
16 ~~public inspection, that the candidate and the candidate's campaign committee~~

1 ~~are without sufficient funds to pay the filing fee, the Secretary of State shall~~

2 waive all but \$300.00 of the payment of the filing fee by that candidate.

3 (f) In order to have votes counted for a write-in candidate under section  
4 2587 of this title, not later than 5:00 p.m. on the second Friday preceding the  
5 presidential primary election, a write-in candidate for nomination by any major  
6 political party shall file with the Secretary of State a form consenting to  
7 candidacy for office as set forth in subsection 2361(b) of this title. The  
8 Secretary of State shall notify the town clerks of any filings made in  
9 ~~accordance with this subsection not later than the Friday before the election.~~

*Sec. 12. 17 V.S.A. § 2702 is amended to read:*

*§ 2702. NOMINATING PETITION*

*(a) The name of any person shall be printed upon the primary ballot as a candidate for nomination by any major political party if petitions signed by at least 1,000 voters in accordance with sections 2353, 2354, and 2358 of this title are filed with the Secretary of State, together with the written consent of the person to the printing of the person's name on the ballot.*

*(b) Petitions shall be filed not later than 5:00 p.m. on the 15th day of December preceding the primary election.*

*(c) The petition shall be in a form prescribed by the Secretary of State.*

*(d) A person's name shall not be listed as a candidate on the primary ballot of more than one party in the same election.*



*(e) Each petition shall be accompanied by a filing fee of \$2,000.00 to be paid to the Secretary of State. However, if the petition of a candidate is accompanied by the affidavit of the candidate, which shall be available for public inspection, that the candidate and the candidate's campaign committee are without sufficient funds to pay the filing fee, the Secretary of State shall waive all but \$300.00 of the payment of the filing fee by that candidate.*

*(f)(1) In order to have votes listed for a write-in candidate under subdivision 2587 of this title, not later than 7:00 p.m. on the day of the primary election, a write-in candidate for the General Assembly, any State office, or any federal office shall complete a form of the Secretary of State's design affirming that the candidate wants to have received votes listed under subdivision 2587(e)(3) of this title. The candidate shall file the form with either all town clerks within the candidate's applicable district or the Secretary of State's Office in an electronic manner approved by the Secretary. The Secretary of State shall notify the appropriate town clerks of any filings made in accordance with this subsection as soon as practicable.*

*(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection, a candidate who has not filed in accordance with subdivision (1) shall qualify as the winner of an election if the candidate otherwise complies with the provisions of this chapter.*

1 ~~Sec. 13. 17 V.S.A. § 2921 is amended to read:~~

2 ~~§ 2921. CANDIDATES; REGISTRATION; CHECKING ACCOUNT;~~

3 ~~TREASURER~~

4 ~~(a) Each candidate who has made expenditures or accepted contributions of~~  
5 ~~\$500.00 or more in an election cycle files a consent to the printing of the~~  
6 ~~candidate's name on the ballot, as provided in section 2361 of this title, shall~~  
7 ~~register with the Secretary of State within 10 days of reaching the \$500.00~~  
8 ~~threshold or on the date that the next report is required of the candidate under~~  
9 ~~this chapter, whichever occurs first, prior to filing the consent stating his or her~~  
10 ~~the candidate's full name and address; the office the candidate is seeking; the~~  
11 ~~name and address of the bank in which the candidate maintains his or her the~~  
12 ~~campaign checking account; if raising or spending any campaign funds, and~~  
13 ~~the name and address of the treasurer responsible for maintaining the checking~~  
14 ~~account. A candidate's treasurer may be the candidate or his or her the~~  
15 ~~candidate's spouse.~~

16 ~~Sec. 13. 17 V.S.A. § 2921 is amended to read:~~

~~§ 2921. CANDIDATES; REGISTRATION; CHECKING ACCOUNT;~~

~~TREASURER~~

~~(a)(1) Each candidate who has made expenditures or accepted~~  
~~contributions of \$500.00 or more in an election cycle files a consent to the~~

*~~printing of the candidate's name on the ballot, as provided in section 2361 of this title, shall register with the Secretary of State within 10 days of reaching the \$500.00 threshold or on the date that the next report is required of the candidate under this chapter, whichever occurs first, prior to filing the consent stating his or her the candidate's full name and address; and the office the candidate is seeking;~~*

*~~(2) Each candidate who accepts or expends any campaign funds shall file with the Secretary of State at the time of expending the funds the name and address of the bank in which the candidate maintains his or her the campaign checking account; and the name and address of the treasurer responsible for maintaining the checking account. A candidate's treasurer may be the candidate or his or her the candidate's spouse.~~*

\* \* \*

1 ~~Sec. 14. 17 V.S.A. § 2964 is amended to read:~~

2 § 2964. CAMPAIGN REPORTS; CANDIDATES FOR STATE OFFICE,  
3 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND COUNTY OFFICE;  
4 POLITICAL COMMITTEES; POLITICAL PARTIES

5 (a)(1) Each candidate for State office, the General Assembly, or a two-  
6 year-term county office ~~who has rolled over any amount of surplus into his or~~  
7 ~~her new campaign or who has made expenditures or accepted contributions of~~  
8 ~~\$500.00 or more during the two-year general election cycle and, except as~~

1 ~~provided in subsection (b) of this section, each political committee that has not~~  
2 ~~filed a final report pursuant to subsection 2965(b) of this chapter, and each~~  
3 ~~political party required to register under section 2923 of this chapter shall file~~  
4 ~~with the Secretary of State campaign finance reports as follows:~~

5 \* \* \*

6 (2) ~~Each candidate for a four-year term county office who has rolled~~  
7 ~~over any amount of surplus into his or her new campaign or who has made~~  
8 ~~expenditures or accepted contributions of \$500.00 or more during the four-~~  
9 ~~year general election cycle shall file with the Secretary of State campaign~~  
10 ~~finance reports as follows:~~

11 *Sec. 14. 17 V.S.A. § 2964 is amended to read:*

*§ 2964. CAMPAIGN REPORTS; CANDIDATES FOR STATE OFFICE,  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND COUNTY OFFICE;  
POLITICAL COMMITTEES; POLITICAL PARTIES*

*(a)(1) Each candidate for State office, the General Assembly, or a two-  
year-term county office who has rolled over any amount of surplus into his or  
her new campaign or who has made expenditures or accepted contributions of  
\$500.00 or more during the two-year general election cycle and, except as  
provided in subsection (b) of this section, each political committee that has not  
filed a final report pursuant to subsection 2965(b) of this chapter, and each*

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

(11) “Mass media activity” means a television commercial, radio commercial, ~~Internet~~ internet advertisement, mass mailing, mass electronic or

1 digital communication, literature drop, newspaper or periodical advertisement,  
2 robotic phone call, or telephone bank, that includes the name or likeness of a  
3 clearly identified candidate for office.

4 ~~(12)~~(11) “Party candidate listing” means any communication by a  
5 political party that:

6 \* \* \*

7 ~~(13)~~(12) “Political committee” or “political action committee” means  
8 any formal or informal committee of ~~two~~ one or more individuals or a  
9 corporation, labor organization, public interest group, or other entity, not  
10 including a political party, that accepts contributions of \$1,000.00 or more ~~and~~  
11 or makes expenditures of \$1,000.00 or more in any two-year general election  
12 cycle for the purpose of supporting or opposing one or more candidates,  
13 influencing an election, or advocating a position on a public question in any  
14 election, and includes ~~an independent expenditure-only political committee a~~  
15 public question campaign and a legislative leadership political committee.

16 ~~(14)~~(13) “Political party” means a political party organized under  
17 chapter 45 of this title and any committee established, financed, maintained, or  
18 controlled by the party, including any subsidiary, branch, or local unit thereof,  
19 and shall be considered a single, unified political party. The national affiliate  
20 of the political party shall be considered a separate political party.

(15) “Public question campaign” means a political campaign, specifically an effort to influence an election, that conducts its activities entirely independent of candidates; does not give contributions to candidates, political committees, or political parties; does not make any “related campaign expenditures” as defined in subsection 2944(b) of this title; and is not closely related to a political party or to a political committee that makes contributions to candidates or makes related expenditures. A “public question campaign” includes any campaign making independent expenditures as defined by 52 U.S.C. § 30101.

\* \* \*

Sec. 16. 17 V.S.A. § 2971 is amended to read:

§ 2971. REPORT OF MASS MEDIA ACTIVITIES

\* \* \*

(d)(1) In addition to the reporting requirements of this section, an independent expenditure-only political committee a public question campaign that makes an expenditure for any one mass media activity totaling \$5,000.00 or more, adjusted for inflation pursuant to the Consumer Price Index as provided in section 2905 of this chapter, within 45 days before a primary, general, county, or local election shall, for each such activity and within 24

1 hours of the expenditure or activity, whichever occurs first, file ~~an independent~~  
2 ~~expenditure-only political committee~~ a public question campaign mass media  
3 report with the Secretary of State and send a copy of the report to each  
4 candidate whose name or likeness is included in the activity without that  
5 candidate's knowledge.

6 \* \* \*

7 Sec. 17. REPEAL

8 17 V.S.A. § 2970 (campaign reports; other entities; public questions) is  
9 repealed.

10 \* \* \* Audits of Voter Checklists and District Boundaries \* \* \*

11 Sec. 18. AUDITS OF VOTER CHECKLISTS AND DISTRICT  
12 BOUNDARIES

13 (a) On or before September 15, 2025, local boards of civil authority and  
14 town clerks whose municipal boundaries are divided for the purpose of  
15 Representative districts and Senatorial districts shall audit their voter checklists  
16 to ensure that those checklists accurately correspond to the prescribed district  
17 boundaries.

18 (b) On or before October 1, 2025, each town clerk described in subsection  
19 (a) of this section shall provide a written summary of the audit to the Elections  
20 Division of the Secretary of State's office.



1       (c) On or before November 15, 2025, the Secretary shall submit a written  
2       report to the House Committee on Government Operations and Military  
3       Affairs and the Senate Committee on Government Operations with the  
4       findings of the audits.

5       (d) Within two weeks after passage of this act, the Elections Division of the  
6       Secretary of State's office shall notify each town clerk and board of civil  
7       authority described in subsection (a) of this section that they must perform the  
8       audits.

9       (e) The Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office shall provide  
10       support and training to each town clerk and board of civil authority described  
11       in subsection (a) of this section.

12               \* \* \* Prohibiting Appointment of Interested Parties to a Recount

13                               Committee \* \* \*

14       Sec. 19. 17 V.S.A. § 2602a is amended to read:

15       § 2602a. APPOINTMENT OF RECOUNT COMMITTEE

16       (a)(1) Upon receipt of a petition, the county clerk shall notify all  
17       candidates for the office that is the subject of the recount, advising them to  
18       each submit immediately a list of a minimum of 10 nominees for disinterested  
19       individuals to serve on a recount committee.

20       (2)(A) If a list of nominees is not delivered to the county clerk within  
21       two business days, the clerk shall notify the appropriate candidates that they

1 have 24 hours to submit lists of nominees for disinterested individuals to serve  
2 on the recount committee.

3 \* \* \*

4 (b)(1) The Superior Court shall make a minimum of 12 appointments to  
5 the recount committee from among those nominated under this section, with  
6 the number of appointments based on the number of votes to be recounted and  
7 a goal of completing the recount within one day.

8 (2) In making these appointments, the court shall appoint an equal  
9 number of ~~persons~~ disinterested individuals representing each candidate, to the  
10 extent practicable.

11 (c) As used in this section, “disinterested individual” means an individual  
12 who is not a relative of or subordinate to the candidates and who shares no  
13 direct pecuniary interest with the candidates.

14 \* \* \* Deadline Modifications and Miscellaneous Clarifications \* \* \*

15 Sec. 20. 17 V.S.A. § 1971 is amended to read:

16 § 1971. CASTING MORE THAN ONE BALLOT

17 A legal voter who knowingly ~~casts more than one ballot at any one time of~~  
18 ~~balloting~~ votes more than once in any election held in this State, or who votes  
19 in both this State and another state or territory in the same or equivalent  
20 election for the same office shall be fined not more than \$1,000.00 if the

1 offense is committed at a primary or general election, and not more than  
2 \$100.00 if committed at a local election.

3 Sec. 21. REPEAL

4 17 V.S.A. § 1973 (voting in more than one place) is repealed.

5 Sec. 22. 17 V.S.A. § 2103 is amended to read:

6 § 2103. DEFINITIONS

7 As used in this title, unless the context or a specific definition requires a  
8 different reading:

9 \* \* \*

10 (6) “Campaign” means any organized or coordinated activity undertaken  
11 by ~~two~~ one or more persons, any part of which is designed to influence the  
12 nomination, election, or defeat of any candidate or the passage, defeat, or  
13 modification of any public question.

14 \* \* \*

15 Sec. 23. 17 V.S.A. § 2358 is amended to read:

16 § 2358. EXAMINING PETITIONS; SUPPLEMENTARY PETITIONS

17 \* \* \*

18 (b) If found not to conform, ~~he or she~~ the officer shall state in writing on a  
19 particular petition why it cannot be accepted, and within ~~72 hours~~ two business  
20 days from receipt, ~~he or she~~ the officer shall return it to the candidate in whose  
21 behalf it was filed. In such case, supplementary petitions may be filed not

1 later than 10 days after the date for filing petitions. However, supplementary  
2 petitions shall not be accepted if petitions with signatures of different persons  
3 totaling at least the required number were not received by the filing deadline.

4 \* \* \*

5 Sec. 24. 17 V.S.A. § 2313 is amended to read:

6 § 2313. FILING OF CERTIFICATE OF ORGANIZATION

7 \* \* \*

8 (f) At the same time of filing the certificate of organization, the chair and  
9 secretary shall file with the Secretary of State a single machine-readable  
10 electronic document containing a list of the names and contact information, in  
11 a format specified by the Secretary of State, of the town and county committee  
12 members from those towns and counties who have organized pursuant to this  
13 chapter.

14 (g) A committee is not considered organized until the material required by  
15 this section has been filed and accepted.

16 Sec. 25. 17 V.S.A. § 2413 is amended to read:

17 § 2413. NOMINATION OF JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

18 (a)(1) The party members in each town, on or before the third Monday in  
19 July before each primary election, upon the call of the town committee, may  
20 meet in caucus and nominate candidates for justice of the peace.

21 \* \* \*

1 (e) For any nomination made under this section, the chair and secretary of  
2 the committee or caucus shall file the statement required by section 2385 of  
3 this title by 5:00 p.m. on the ~~third day following~~ fourth Monday in July before  
4 the primary election.

5 Sec. 26. 17 V.S.A. § 2493 is amended to read:

6 § 2493. RULES FOR USE OF VOTE TABULATORS; AUDITS

7 (a) The Secretary of State shall adopt rules governing the use and the  
8 selection of any vote tabulator in the State. These rules shall include  
9 requirements that:

10 \* \* \*

11 (3)(A) The Secretary of State shall conduct a ~~random~~ postelection audit  
12 of any polling place election results for a general election within 30 days of the  
13 election.

14 (B) If the Secretary determines that a ~~random~~ an audit shall be  
15 conducted of the election results in a town or city, the town clerk shall direct  
16 two members of the board of civil authority to transport the ballot bags to the  
17 office of the Secretary not later than 10:00 a.m. on the morning when the  
18 Secretary has scheduled the audit.

19 \* \* \*

1 Sec. 27. 17 V.S.A. § 2546 is amended to read:

2 § 2546. RECEIPT OF BALLOTS BY CLERK; VOTER STATUS;  
3 OPPORTUNITY TO CURE; PROCESSING ABSENTEE  
4 BALLOTS

5 (a) Town clerk; process generally. Beginning ~~30~~ 45 days before the  
6 opening of the polls on election day, upon receipt of a mailing envelope  
7 containing ballots returned by a voter, the town clerk shall, within three  
8 business days or on the next day the office is open for business, whichever is  
9 later, direct two election officials working together to do all of the following:

10 \* \* \*

11 Sec. 28. 17 V.S.A. § 2703 is amended to read:

12 § 2703. EXAMINING PETITIONS; SUPPLEMENTARY PETITIONS

13 The Secretary of State shall examine the petitions and ascertain whether  
14 they conform to the provisions of this chapter, and sections 2353, 2354, and  
15 2358 of this title. If found not to conform, ~~he or she~~ the Secretary shall state  
16 in writing why a particular petition cannot be accepted, and within ~~72 hours~~  
17 two business days from receipt ~~he or she~~ the Secretary shall return it to the  
18 candidate in whose behalf it was filed. In such case, supplementary petitions  
19 may be filed not later than 10 days after the deadline for filing petitions.  
20 However, supplementary petitions shall not be accepted if petitions with the

1 signatures of at least 1,000 persons were not filed by the deadline for filing  
2 petitions set forth in section 2702 of this chapter.

3 \* \* \* Local Elections; Open Meeting Law Not Applicable to Annual  
4 Meetings \* \* \*

5 Sec. 29. 1 V.S.A. § 310 is amended to read:

6 § 310. DEFINITIONS

7 As used in this subchapter:

8 \* \* \*

9 (5)(A) “Meeting” means a gathering of a quorum of the members of a  
10 public body for the purpose of discussing the business of the public body or  
11 for the purpose of taking action.

12 \* \* \*

13 (E) “Meeting” does not mean a gathering of the voters of a  
14 municipality for purposes of conducting an annual or special municipal  
15 meeting.

16 (6) “Public body” means any board, council, or commission of the State  
17 or one or more of its political subdivisions, any board, council, or commission  
18 of any agency, authority, or instrumentality of the State or one or more of its  
19 political subdivisions, or any committee or subcommittee of any of the  
20 foregoing boards, councils, or commissions, except that “public body” does  
21 not include;

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

\* \* \*



\* \* \*

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

1 (D) A voter may withdraw ~~his or her~~ the voter's name from a  
2 petitioned article at any time prior to the signing of the warning by a majority  
3 of the legislative body. The voter acting as the lead petitioner may withdraw  
4 the petitioned article in its entirety prior to the signing of the warning by a  
5 majority of the legislative body.

6 \* \* \*

7 § 2645. CHARTERS; ADOPTION, REPEAL, OR AMENDMENT;  
8 PROCEDURE

9 (a) A municipality may propose to the General Assembly to adopt, repeal,  
10 or amend its charter by majority vote of the legal voters of the municipality  
11 present and voting at any annual or special meeting warned for that purpose in  
12 accordance with the following procedure:

13 \* \* \*

14 (6)(A) Notice of ~~each public hearing and of~~ the annual or special  
15 meeting shall be given in accordance with section 2641 of this chapter. Notice  
16 of each public hearing shall be given 10 days preceding the hearing and in the  
17 same locations and manner as required by section 2641 of this chapter.

18 \* \* \*

19 § 2651a. CONSTABLES; APPOINTMENT; REMOVAL; ELIMINATION  
20 OF OFFICE

1       (a)(1) A town may vote ~~by Australian ballot~~ at an annual or special  
2       meeting to authorize the selectboard to appoint a first constable, and if needed  
3       a second constable, in which case at least a first constable shall be appointed.

4                                   \* \* \*

5       (3) When a town votes to authorize the selectboard to appoint  
6       constables, the selectboard's authority to make ~~such~~ the appointments shall  
7       remain in effect until the town rescinds that authority by the majority vote of  
8       the registered voters ~~present and voting~~ at an annual or special meeting duly  
9       warned for that purpose.

10      ~~(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) to the contrary, a vote~~  
11      ~~to authorize the selectboard to appoint constables shall become effective only~~  
12      ~~upon a two-thirds vote of those present and voting if a written protest against~~  
13      ~~the authorization is filed with the selectboard at least 15 days before the vote~~  
14      ~~by at least five percent of the voters of the town. [Repealed.]~~

15                                   \* \* \*

16      § 2651d. COLLECTOR OF DELINQUENT TAXES; APPOINTMENT;  
17                                   REMOVAL

18      (a)(1) A municipality may vote at an annual or special municipal meeting  
19      to authorize the legislative body to appoint a collector of delinquent taxes, who  
20      may be the municipal treasurer.

1           (2) ~~A collector of delinquent taxes so appointed may be removed by the~~  
2     ~~legislative body for just cause after notice and hearing~~ The appointment of a  
3     ~~collector of delinquent taxes shall be for a one-year term.~~

4                                   \* \* \*

5     § 2651e. MUNICIPAL CLERK; APPOINTMENT; REMOVAL

6           (a)(1) A municipality may vote at an annual meeting to authorize the  
7     legislative body to appoint the municipal clerk.

8           (2) ~~A municipal clerk so appointed may be removed by the legislative~~  
9     ~~body for just cause after notice and hearing~~ The appointment of a municipal  
10    ~~clerk shall be for a one-year term.~~

11                               \* \* \*

12    § 2651f. MUNICIPAL TREASURER; APPOINTMENT; REMOVAL

13           (a)(1) A municipality may vote at an annual meeting to authorize the  
14    legislative body to appoint the municipal treasurer.

15           (2) ~~A treasurer so appointed may be removed by the legislative body for~~  
16    ~~just cause after notice and hearing~~ The appointment of a municipal treasurer  
17    ~~shall be for a one-year term.~~

18                               \* \* \*

19    § 2662. VALIDATION OF MUNICIPAL MEETINGS

20           When any of the requirements as to notice or warning of an annual or  
21    special municipal meeting have been omitted or not complied with, the

1 omission or noncompliance, if the meeting and the business transacted at it is  
2 otherwise legal and within the scope of the municipal powers, may be  
3 corrected and legalized by vote at a regular meeting or special meeting of the  
4 municipality called and duly warned for that purpose. The question to be  
5 voted upon shall substantially be, “Shall the action taken at the meeting of this  
6 town (or city, village or district) held on (state date) in spite of the fact that  
7 (state the error or omission), and any act or action of the municipal officers or  
8 agents pursuant thereto be readopted, ratified, and confirmed.” Errors or  
9 omissions in the conduct of an original meeting that are not the result of an  
10 unlawful notice or warning or noncompliance within the scope of the warning,  
11 including technical errors within the content of a ballot, may be cured by a  
12 resolution of the legislative body of the municipality by a vote of two-thirds of  
13 all its members at a regular meeting or a special meeting called for that  
14 purpose, stating that the defect was the result of oversight, inadvertence, or  
15 mistake. When an error or omission of this nature has been ~~thus~~ corrected by  
16 resolution, all business within the terms of the action of the qualified voters  
17 shall be as valid as if the requirements had been initially complied with,  
18 condition, however, that the original action ~~thereby~~ corrected by the legislative  
19 body was in compliance with the legal exercise of its corporate powers.

20 \* \* \*

21 \* \* \* Local Elections; Australian Ballot System \* \* \*

1       Sec. 32. 17 V.S.A. chapter 55, subchapter 3 is amended to read:

2               Subchapter 3. Local Elections Using the Australian Ballot System

3       § 2680. AUSTRALIAN BALLOT SYSTEM; GENERAL

4                               \* \* \*

5               (h) Hearing.

6               (1) Whenever a municipality has voted to adopt the Australian ballot  
7       system of voting on any public question or budget, except the budget revote as  
8       provided in subsection (c) of this section or as otherwise specified in State law  
9       requiring the use of Australian ballot of system of voting but not expressly  
10       requiring an informational hearing, the legislative body shall hold a public  
11       informational hearing on the question by posting warnings at least 10 days in  
12       advance of the hearing in at least two public places within the municipality and  
13       in the town clerk's office.

14                               \* \* \*

15       § 2681. NOMINATIONS; PETITIONS; CONSENTS

16               (a)(1)(A) Nominations of the municipal officers shall be by petition. The  
17       petition shall be filed with the municipal clerk, together with the endorsement,  
18       if any, of any party or parties in accordance with the provisions of this title, not  
19       later than 5:00 p.m. on the ~~sixth~~ fifth Monday preceding the day of the  
20       election, which shall be the filing deadline.

1 (B) A candidate shall be registered to vote in the town ~~he or she~~ the  
2 candidate is seeking office at or before the time of filing the petition.

3 \* \* \*

4 \* \* \* Local Elections; Fire Districts; Voters \* \* \*

5 Sec. 33. 20 V.S.A. § 2485 is amended to read:

6 § 2485. OFFICERS GENERALLY

7 A The voters of a fire district shall elect at its first meeting and at each  
8 annual meeting thereafter a clerk, a treasurer, and a collector of taxes. ~~Such~~  
9 ~~fire district~~ The voters may elect a chief engineer and ~~such~~ any assistant  
10 engineers as are necessary, whether or not they are inhabitants of the district,  
11 who shall rank in the order of their election. ~~Such~~ The officers shall hold  
12 office until the next annual meeting and until others are elected. A vacancy in  
13 any office may be filled by the prudential committee. ~~Such district at its~~ At  
14 the district's first meeting, the voters shall elect a prudential committee that  
15 shall consist of three persons, who shall serve for one, two, and three years,  
16 respectively. ~~Thereafter at~~ At each subsequent annual meeting, a member of  
17 ~~such~~ the prudential committee shall be elected for the term of three years. If  
18 the fire district so votes, two additional persons may be elected to ~~such~~ the  
19 committee for a term of one year. A vacancy in ~~such~~ the committee may be  
20 filled at an annual meeting, or at a special meeting called for that purpose, but  
21 the ~~selectboard~~ legislative body of the town municipality in which ~~such~~ the

1 district is located may fill a vacancy in ~~such~~ the committee until an election by  
2 the appointment of a resident of ~~such~~ the district. When a meeting is not held  
3 on the second Monday in January, the officers of the district may be elected at  
4 a special meeting. The officers shall be elected by ballot if demanded by a  
5 voter and confirmed by a majority vote.

6 \* \* \* Local Elections; Vacancies in Town Offices \* \* \*

7 Sec. 34. 24 V.S.A. chapter 33, subchapter 6 is amended to read:

8 Subchapter 6. Vacancies in Town Offices

9 § 961. VACANCY OR SUSPENSION OF OFFICER'S DUTIES

10 (a) When a an elected municipal officer resigns the officer's office, has  
11 been removed from the office, dies, becomes unable to perform the officer's  
12 duties due to a mental condition or psychiatric disability, or removes from  
13 ~~town~~ the municipality, the office shall become vacant. Notice of this vacancy  
14 shall be posted by the legislative body in at least two public places in the  
15 municipality, and in and near the municipal clerk's office, within 10 days ~~of~~  
16 after the creation of the vacancy.

17 \* \* \*

18 § 962. SPECIAL MUNICIPAL MEETING

19 A ~~town~~ municipality at a special municipal meeting may fill a vacancy in a  
20 ~~town~~ municipal office.



§ 963. DUTIES OF SELECTBOARD; SPECIAL MEETING

(a) When a vacancy occurs in any town office, the selectboard forthwith by appointment in writing shall fill ~~such~~ the vacancy until an election is had; except that in the event of vacancies in a majority of the selectboard at the same time, ~~such~~ the vacancies shall be filled by a special ~~town~~ municipal meeting called for that purpose. Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection, the selectboard shall not be required to fill a vacancy that occurs within 90 days before the date of the municipality's annual meeting.

(b) The selectboard shall file an appointment made under this section in the office of the ~~town~~ municipal clerk and the ~~town~~ clerk shall duly record it in the book of ~~town~~ municipal records.

(c) If there are no selectboard members in office, the Secretary of State shall call a special election to fill any vacancies and for that interim shall appoint and authorize the ~~town~~ municipal clerk or another qualified person to draw orders for payment of continuing obligations and necessary expenses until the vacancies are filled.

\* \* \* Local Elections; Authority of Constables \* \* \*

Sec. 35. 24 V.S.A. § 1529 is amended to read:

§ 1529. FIRST CONSTABLE AS COLLECTOR

The first constable, if elected, shall be collector of State, county, town, and town school district taxes when a collector of taxes is not appointed or elected

1 at the annual town meeting, and shall pay over the taxes collected agreeably to  
2 the warrants for their collection.

3 Sec. 36. 24 V.S.A. § 1936a is amended to read:

4 § 1936a. CONSTABLES; POWERS AND QUALIFICATIONS

5 (a) A town may vote at a special or annual town meeting to prohibit  
6 constables from exercising any law enforcement authority. A vote to prohibit  
7 constables from exercising any law enforcement authority shall remain in  
8 effect until rescinded by the majority vote of the registered voters at an annual  
9 or special meeting duly warned for that purpose.

10 \* \* \*

11 \* \* \* Effective Date \* \* \*

12 Sec. 37. EFFECTIVE DATE

13 This act shall take effect on passage.