

1 S.298

2 An act relating to creating the Vermont Voting Rights Act

3 The House proposes to the Senate to amend the bill by striking out all after
4 the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

5 * * * Voter Protections Act * * *

6 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

7 This act may be cited as the “Voter Protections Act of 2026.”

8 Sec. 2. 17 V.S.A. chapter 35 is amended to read:

9 CHAPTER 35. OFFENSES AGAINST THE PURITY OF ELECTIONS

10 * * *

11 Subchapter 2. Penalties Upon Voters

12 * * *

13 § 1972. SHOWING BALLOT; ~~INTERFERENCE WITH VOTER~~

14 (a) A voter who, except in cases of assistance as provided in this title,
15 allows ~~his or her~~ the voter’s ballot to be seen by another person with an
16 apparent intention of letting it be known how ~~he or she~~ the voter is about to
17 vote or makes a false statement to the presiding officer at an election as to ~~his~~
18 ~~or her~~ the voter’s inability to mark ~~his or her~~ the voter’s ballot or places a
19 distinguishing mark on ~~his or her~~ the voter’s ballot ~~or a person who interferes~~
20 ~~with a voter when inside the guard rail or who, within the building in which the~~

1 ~~voting is proceeding, endeavors to induce a voter to vote for a particular~~
2 ~~candidate, shall be fined \$1,000.00.~~

3 ~~(b) It shall be the duty of the election officers to see that the offender is~~
4 ~~duly prosecuted for a violation of this section.~~

5 * * *

6 § 1975. INTERFERENCE WITH VOTERS AND ELECTION OFFICIALS

7 (a) No person shall intentionally or recklessly intimidate, threaten, or
8 coerce, or attempt to intimidate, threaten, or coerce:

9 (1) any other person for the purpose of:

10 (A) obstructing the right of the other person to vote or to vote as the
11 other person may choose; or

12 (B) causing the other person to vote for, or not to vote for, any
13 candidate for public office or public question at any election; or

14 (2) a public servant, an election official, or a public employee for the
15 purpose of obstructing the administration of an election.

16 (b) A person who violates subsection (a) of this section shall be imprisoned
17 not more than two years or fined not more than \$2,000.00, or both.

18 § 1976. IMPAIRMENT OF VOTING RIGHTS OF REGISTERED VOTERS

19 Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to deny, impair, or otherwise
20 adversely affect the right to vote of any registered voter.

21 * * *

1 (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to establish a right to have
2 members of a protected class elected in numbers equal to their proportion in
3 the population.

4 (d) As used in this section:

5 (1) “Municipality” means a town, city, village, school district, or other
6 political subdivision that holds public elections.

7 (2) “Protected class” means a group of citizens protected from
8 discrimination based on race or color, membership in a language minority
9 group, or having a disability as defined in 9 V.S.A. § 4501.

10 § 2046. CIVIL ACTIONS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL

11 (a) Whenever the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a
12 violation of this subchapter has occurred and that the rights of any voter or
13 group of voters have been affected by such violation, the Attorney General
14 may initiate a civil action in the Civil Division of the Superior Court in the
15 county in which the alleged violation has occurred for appropriate relief.

16 (b) In such civil action, the court may:

17 (1) award such preventive relief, including a permanent or temporary
18 injunction, restraining order, or other order against the person responsible for a
19 violation of this title, as is necessary to ensure the full enjoyment of the rights
20 granted by this title;

1 the statewide voter checklist or any other municipal voter checklist, the
2 affirmation shall be filed with the municipal clerk.

3 * * *

4 * * * Disclosures for Candidates for State, Legislative, and County Office

5 * * *

6 Sec. 4. 17 V.S.A. § 2414 is amended to read:

7 § 2414. CANDIDATES FOR STATE ~~AND~~, LEGISLATIVE, AND
8 COUNTY OFFICE; DISCLOSURE FORM

9 * * *

10 (f)(1) The State Ethics Commission shall provide informational resources
11 to candidates and answer candidates' questions regarding the requirements of
12 this section, how to accurately complete and submit the disclosure form, and
13 the penalties for failing to properly file the disclosure form pursuant to section
14 2415 of this title. The Commission shall make available on its web page the
15 disclosure form, preprepared responses to frequently asked questions, and any
16 informational resources and materials that it deems necessary to adequately
17 inform candidates of how to comply with the provisions of this section. Upon
18 contact by a candidate, the Commission shall provide answers to the
19 candidate's questions by email or by phone, whichever the candidate may
20 prefer.

1 to be paid, for the purpose of influencing an election, advocating a position on
2 a public question, or supporting or opposing one or more candidates.

3 (A) Expenditures may include those expenses that are necessary to
4 allow a candidate to campaign, such as expenses for the care of a dependent
5 family member that are incurred as a direct result of campaign activity or for
6 the provision of monitoring systems, protective detail, and cybersecurity
7 related to a candidate's security.

8 * * *

9 * * * Effective Date * * *

10 Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

11 This act shall take effect on passage.

12 and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: "An act relating
13 to voter protections"