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HOUSE BILL NO. 2255

Offered January 13, 2021

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 24.2-103 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Department of Elections; public availability of instructions and guidance directed to local elections officials.*

Patron—Ransone

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 24.2-103 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 24.2-103. Powers and duties in general; report.**

A. The State Board, through the Department of Elections, shall supervise and coordinate the work of the county and city electoral boards and of the registrars to obtain uniformity in their practices and proceedings and legality and purity in all elections. Its supervision shall ensure that major risks to election integrity are (i) identified and assessed and (ii) addressed as necessary to promote election uniformity, legality, and purity. It shall make rules and regulations and issue instructions and provide information consistent with the election laws to the electoral boards and registrars to promote the proper administration of election laws. *All instructions and guidance directed or provided by the State Board or the Department of Elections to the electoral boards and registrars regarding the administration or conduct of elections, including the registration of voters, shall be made publicly available on the official website of the Department of Elections within 24 hours of being issued to the electoral boards and registrars.*

Electoral boards and registrars shall provide information requested by the State Board and shall follow (a) the elections laws and (b) the rules and regulations of the State Board insofar as they do not conflict with Virginia or federal law. The State Board shall post on the Internet within three business days any rules or regulations made by the State Board. Upon request and at a reasonable charge not to exceed the actual cost incurred, the State Board shall provide to any requesting political party or candidate, within three days of the receipt of the request, copies of any instructions or information provided by the State Board to the local electoral boards and registrars.

B. The State Board, through the Department of Elections, shall ensure that the members of the electoral boards are properly trained to carry out their duties by offering training annually, or more often, as it deems appropriate, and without charging any fees to the electoral boards for the training.

C. The State Board, through the Department of Elections, shall conduct a certification program for the general registrars and shall require each general registrar to receive certification through such program from the Department within 12 months of his initial appointment or any subsequent reappointment. The State Board may grant a waiver requested by a local electoral board to extend, on a case-by-case basis, this deadline by up to three months. The State Board shall develop a training curriculum for the certification program and standards for completing the program and maintaining certification, including required hours of annual training. No fees shall be charged to a general registrar for any required training as part of the certification program. The State Board shall review the certification program every four years, or more often as it deems appropriate.

D. The State Board shall set the training standards for the officers of election and shall develop standardized training programs for the officers of election to be conducted by the local electoral boards and the general registrars. Training of the officers of election shall be conducted and certified as provided by § 24.2-115.2. The State Board shall provide standardized training materials for such training and shall also offer on the Department of Elections website a training course for officers of election. The content of the online training course shall be consistent with the standardized training programs developed pursuant to this section. The State Board shall review the standardized training materials and the content of the online training course every two years in the year immediately following a general election for federal office.

E. The State Board may institute proceedings pursuant to § 24.2-234 for the removal of any member of an electoral board who fails to discharge the duties of his office in accordance with law. The State Board may petition the local electoral board to remove from office any general registrar who fails to discharge the duties of his office according to law. The State Board may institute proceedings pursuant to § 24.2-234 for the removal of a general registrar if the local electoral board refuses to remove the general registrar and the State Board finds that the failure to remove the general registrar has a material adverse effect upon the conduct of either the registrar's office or any election. Any action taken by the State Board pursuant to this subsection shall require a recorded majority vote of the Board.

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59 F. The State Board may petition a circuit court or the Supreme Court, whichever is appropriate, for a
60 writ of mandamus or prohibition, or other available legal relief, for the purpose of ensuring that
61 elections are conducted as provided by law.

62 G. The Department of Elections shall supervise its own staff to assure that no member of its staff
63 shall serve (i) as the chairman of a political party or other officer of a state-, local-, or district-level
64 political party committee or (ii) as a paid or volunteer worker in the campaign of a candidate for
65 nomination or election to an office filled by election in whole or in part by the qualified voters of the
66 Commonwealth.

67 H. The Department of Elections shall employ a Director of Operations who shall be responsible for
68 managing the day-to-day operations at the Department of Elections and ensuring (i) fulfillment of the
69 Department's mission and responsibilities; (ii) compliance with state and federal election laws and
70 regulations; and (iii) compliance with the Department's business, administrative, and financial policies.
71 This position shall be a full-time classified position subject to the Virginia Personnel Act (§ 2.2-2900 et
72 seq.).

73 I. The State Board shall adopt a seal for its use and bylaws for its own proceedings.

74 J. The State Board shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the
75 activities of the State Board and the Department of Elections in the previous year. Such report shall be
76 governed by the provisions of § 2.2-608.