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HOUSE BILL NO. 539

Offered January 8, 2020

Prefiled January 5, 2020

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 24.2-103 of the Code of Virginia, relating to State Board of Elections; activities related to the supervision of local electoral boards and general registrars.*

Patron—Carr

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.

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. Electoral boards and registrars shall provide information requested by the State Board and shall follow ~~(i)~~ (a) the elections laws and ~~(ii)~~ (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 and general registrars 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 and general registrars for the training. *The State Board shall be authorized to develop and implement a certification program for the general registrars to ensure that each registrar is sufficiently trained to effectively administer elections.*

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 materials 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.

C. 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.

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

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

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

G. A telephone call between two members of the Board preparing for a meeting shall not constitute a

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HB539

59 meeting under the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.), provided
60 that no discussion or deliberation takes place that would otherwise constitute a meeting.