



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

Raised Bill No. 5509

LCO No. 2648



Referred to Committee on PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduced by:
(PD)

AN ACT CONCERNING JUSTICES OF THE PEACE.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) For the purposes of this
2 section and sections 2 to 4, inclusive, of this act:

3 (1) "Justice of the peace" means any person that holds the office of
4 justice of the peace pursuant to section 9-183b, 9-183c, 9-184 or 9-184c of
5 the general statutes, as amended by this act, or section 4 of this act;

6 (2) "Official misconduct" means, in the performance of the duties of a
7 justice of the peace, (A) a justice of the peace's performance of an act
8 prohibited by the general statutes or failure to perform an act mandated
9 by the general statutes, or (B) a justice of the peace's performance of an
10 act in a manner found by the Secretary of the State to be negligent,
11 fraudulent, unlawful or against the public interest, including any
12 conduct prohibited by subsection (a) of section 2 of this act; and

13 (3) "Secretary" means the Secretary of the State.

14 (b) To be qualified to hold the office of justice of the peace, a person

15 shall:

16 (1) Be appointed pursuant to section 9-183b, 9-183c, 9-184 or 9-184c of
17 the general statutes, as amended by this act; and

18 (2) Not later than (A) thirty days after an appointment made after July
19 1, 2027, or (B) August 1, 2027, if such appointment is made on or before
20 July 1, 2027, certify, on a form prescribed by the Secretary, that such
21 person has received and read the manual published by the Secretary
22 pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

23 (c) Not later than July 1, 2027, the Secretary shall publish a manual
24 describing the duties of a justice of the peace on the Internet web site of
25 the Secretary of the State.

26 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective January 1, 2027*) (a) No justice of the peace shall
27 (1) perform any official action with intent to deceive or defraud any
28 person, (2) use the title of justice of the peace in an endorsement or
29 promotional statement for any product, third-party service, contest or
30 other offering, or (3) perform a marriage that the justice of the peace
31 knows or should have known is (A) unlawful under any provision of
32 the general statutes, or (B) fraudulent in violation of 8 USC 1325, as
33 amended from time to time.

34 (b) A justice of the peace shall be liable to any person for any damages
35 proximately caused to that person as a result of the justice of the peace's
36 official misconduct, unless the justice of the peace's employer is found
37 liable pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.

38 (c) An employer of an individual who holds the office of justice of the
39 peace shall be liable to any person for damages proximately caused to
40 that person resulting from the official misconduct of the justice of the
41 peace if (1) such misconduct occurred in the course of business of such
42 employer, and (2) such employer directed, encouraged, consented to,
43 ratified or approved such official misconduct, either (A) in the particular
44 transaction constituting official misconduct, or (B) implicitly by such

45 employer's previous actions in at least one similar transaction
46 constituting official misconduct.

47 (d) An employer of an individual who holds the office of justice of
48 the peace shall be liable to the justice of the peace for any damages (1)
49 recovered from the justice of the peace resulting from official
50 misconduct that was coerced by threat of such employer, including, but
51 not limited to, a threat of demotion or dismissal, if such threat was made
52 by such employer (A) in reference to a particular act of the justice of the
53 peace in the course of business of such employer, or (B) implicitly by
54 such employer's previous actions in at least one similar transaction, or
55 (2) caused to the justice of the peace by a demotion, dismissal or other
56 action by such employer resulting from the justice of the peace's refusal
57 to commit official misconduct in the course of such employer's business.

58 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective January 1, 2027*) (a) The Secretary of the State
59 shall investigate any allegations of official misconduct concerning a
60 justice of the peace and issue a finding at the conclusion of any such
61 investigation.

62 (b) If the Secretary determines that a justice of the peace engaged in
63 official misconduct, the Secretary may (1) deliver a written warning or
64 reprimand to such justice of the peace, or (2) notwithstanding the
65 provisions of any special act, municipal charter or ordinance to the
66 contrary, suspend or revoke the appointment of the justice of the peace.

67 (c) The voluntary or involuntary termination, revocation or lapse of
68 the appointment of a justice of the peace shall not interrupt or preclude
69 an investigation into any allegation of official misconduct concerning
70 such justice of the peace under this section.

71 (d) The Secretary may adopt regulations, in accordance with the
72 provisions of chapter 54 of the general statutes, to carry out the
73 provisions of this section and sections 1 and 2 of this act.

74 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) Notwithstanding the

75 provisions of section 9-183b, 9-183c or 9-184c of the general statutes, as
76 amended by this act, any vacancy in the office of a justice of the peace
77 created by the adoption of an ordinance or charter amendment by a
78 municipality that (1) increases the number of justices of the peace in
79 such municipality, and (2) is effective not less than ninety-one days prior
80 to the next quadrennial appointment of justices of the peace in the
81 municipality, may be filled by appointment prior to the next
82 quadrennial appointment according to the provisions of this section.

83 (b) (1) (A) The town clerk shall select, pursuant to subsection (d) of
84 section 9-184c of the general statutes, as amended by this act, one-third
85 of the total number of justices of the peace, except as provided in
86 subparagraph (B) of subdivision (2) of this subsection, to fill vacancies
87 created by the adoption of an ordinance or charter amendment
88 described in subsection (a) of this section.

89 (B) After the selections made by the town clerk pursuant to
90 subparagraph (A) of subdivision (1) of this subsection, the political
91 parties that are major political parties, as defined in subparagraph (B) of
92 subdivision (5) of section 9-372 of the general statutes, shall be entitled
93 to nominate an equal number of the total number of justices of the peace
94 to fill the remaining vacancies created by the adoption of such
95 ordinance, except in any municipality where the number of justices of
96 the peace to be nominated under this section is not divisible by the
97 number of political parties entitled to nominate justices of the peace
98 under this section, the registrars of voters shall determine by lot which
99 of said parties may nominate one more justice of the peace than may be
100 nominated by the other party or parties. Such nomination by such
101 parties shall qualify a nominee to serve as a justice of the peace.

102 (2) (A) In the event that a political party that is a major party, as
103 defined in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (5) of section 9-372 of the
104 general statutes, but is not a major party, as defined in subparagraph (B)
105 of said subdivision, is entitled to nominate an individual or individuals
106 to serve as a justice of the peace to fill any such vacancy, such party shall

107 be entitled to nominate twenty per cent of the total number of justices of
108 the peace to fill such vacancies, provided such percentage shall be
109 rounded down to the nearest whole number. Such nomination by such
110 parties shall qualify a nominee to serve as a justice of the peace.

111 (B) The town clerk shall select one-third of the total number of justices
112 of the peace to fill vacancies that are created by the adoption of such
113 ordinance or charter amendment less the number of justices of the peace
114 selected under subparagraph (A) of this subdivision to fill such
115 vacancies.

116 (c) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 9-183b, 9-183c and 9-
117 184c of the general statutes, as amended by this act, any person
118 appointed to fill a vacancy in the office of a justice of the peace pursuant
119 to subsection (b) of this section shall serve until the next quadrennial
120 appointment of justices of the peace in the municipality.

121 (d) If a vacancy in the office of a justice of the peace has been filled by
122 appointment by a town committee, the chairperson or secretary of such
123 town committee shall file with the town clerk a certificate of each such
124 appointment, and the town clerk shall record the certificate with the
125 records of the town meeting. The town clerk shall notify the Secretary
126 of the State of any such appointment.

127 Sec. 5. Section 9-184c of the general statutes is repealed and the
128 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

129 (a) In 1994, 1996, and quadrennially thereafter, the town clerk of each
130 town shall appoint as justice of the peace a number of electors of the
131 town who are not members of major parties, as defined in section 9-372,
132 which shall not exceed (1) where no justices of the peace are selected
133 under section 9-183c, one-third of the total number of justices of the
134 peace in the town, or (2) where justices of the peace are selected under
135 section 9-183c, one-third of the total number of justices of the peace in
136 the town less the number of justices of the peace in the town selected
137 under section 9-183c. Such percentage shall be rounded up to the nearest

138 whole number of justices of the peace. Any such appointment shall be
139 made upon written application submitted on or after August first and
140 on or before November first, in such year. No person who has
141 enrollment privileges in the town in a political party [which] that
142 selected justices of the peace under section 9-183b or [under section] 9-
143 183c within the period beginning three months before said August first
144 and ending on the date the person is to be appointed under this [section]
145 subsection, shall be eligible for such appointment. Not later than August
146 1, 1996, and quadrennially thereafter, the town clerk shall send a written
147 notice to each incumbent justice of the peace appointed under this
148 section. Such notice shall inform such justices of the peace of the
149 procedures set forth in this section concerning the reappointment of
150 such justices of the peace.

151 (b) If, on November first in such year, the number of applications for
152 justice of the peace filed with the town clerk under subsection (a) of this
153 section exceeds the number of justices of the peace allowed under this
154 section, (1) each such applicant who is an incumbent justice of the peace
155 appointed under this section shall be reappointed if there are sufficient
156 openings and (2) the town clerk shall, on or before the fifteenth business
157 day of November, select the remaining applicants to be appointed as
158 justices of the peace by lot in a ceremony which shall be open to the
159 public and held on five days' public notice. At such lottery the town
160 clerk shall determine the order of all such remaining applications for the
161 purpose of filling future vacancies under subsection (d) of this section.
162 If [a] the town clerk receives a number of applications pursuant to
163 subsection (a) of this section that is less than the number of justices of
164 the peace that [he] the town clerk is authorized to appoint under this
165 section in any year, [he shall not] the town clerk may only appoint [any]
166 additional justices of the peace to fill vacancies in the office of a justice
167 of the peace in accordance with the provisions of subsections (d) and (e)
168 of this section.

169 (c) Justices of the peace appointed in 1994 [,] shall serve a term of two
170 years beginning on the first Monday in 1995, and justices of the peace

171 appointed in 1996 and thereafter shall serve a term of four years
172 beginning on the first Monday in January in the succeeding year.

173 (d) Any vacancy in the office of any such justice of the peace, except
174 for a vacancy described in subsection (a) of section 4 of this act, shall be
175 filled by appointment by the town clerk of an elector qualifying under
176 subsection (a) of this section in the order determined in the lottery held
177 under [said] subsection (b) of this section. If no such lottery is held, or if
178 the town clerk receives a number of applications that is less than the
179 number of justices of the peace that the town clerk is authorized to
180 appoint under this section, such that the number of vacancies exceeds
181 the number of remaining applicants determined in the lottery held
182 under subsection (b) of this section, the vacancy shall [not] be filled
183 pursuant to subsection (e) of this section.

184 (e) If no such lottery is held, or if the number of vacancies exceeds the
185 number of remaining applicants determined in the lottery held under
186 subsection (b) of this section, the town clerk shall issue a public notice
187 of the number of such vacancies and the procedure for appointing new
188 justices of the peace under this subsection. Any such appointment shall
189 be made upon written application submitted not later than thirty days
190 following such public notice. No person who has enrollment privileges
191 in the town in a political party that selected justices of the peace under
192 section 9-183b or 9-183c during the period beginning three months
193 before the public notice under this subsection and ending on the date
194 the person is to be appointed under this subsection shall be eligible for
195 such appointment. If the number of applications for justice of the peace
196 filed with the town clerk under this subsection exceeds the number of
197 vacancies specified in the public notice, the town clerk shall, not earlier
198 than ten days and not later than fifteen days following the close of the
199 period for submission of such applications, select the remaining
200 applicants to be appointed as justices of the peace by lottery in a
201 ceremony that shall be open to the public and held not earlier than five
202 days after the giving of public notice by the town clerk. At such lottery,
203 the town clerk shall determine the order of all such remaining

204 applications for the purpose of filling future vacancies under subsection
205 (d) of this section. If a town clerk receives a number of applications
206 under this subsection that is less than the number of justices of the peace
207 that the town clerk is authorized to appoint under this section in any
208 year, the town clerk shall not appoint any additional justices of the
209 peace.

210 Sec. 6. Section 46b-25 of the general statutes is repealed and the
211 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

212 No license may be issued by the registrar until both persons have
213 appeared before the registrar and [made application] applied for a
214 license. The registrar shall issue a license to any two persons eligible to
215 marry under this chapter, provided no such license may be issued by
216 the registrar sooner than forty-eight hours after the time of such
217 application. The license shall be completed in its entirety, dated, signed
218 and sworn to by each applicant and shall state each applicant's name,
219 age, birthplace, residence, whether single, widowed or divorced and
220 whether under the supervision or control of a conservator or guardian.
221 The Social Security numbers of both persons shall be recorded in the
222 "administrative purposes" section of the license. [If] For the purpose of
223 determining the time of application pursuant to this section, if the
224 license is signed and sworn to by the applicants on different dates, the
225 later date shall be deemed the date of application.

226 Sec. 7. Section 46b-24 of the general statutes is repealed and the
227 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

228 (a) Except as provided in section 46b-28a, no persons may be joined
229 in marriage in this state until both have complied with the provisions of
230 this section, sections 46b-20a, 46b-25, as amended by this act, and 46b-
231 29 to 46b-33, inclusive, and have been issued a license by the registrar
232 for the town in which the marriage is to be celebrated, which license
233 shall bear the certification of the registrar that the persons named
234 therein have complied with the provisions of said sections.

235 (b) Such license, when certified by the registrar, is sufficient authority
236 for any person authorized to perform a marriage ceremony in this state
237 to join such persons in marriage, provided the ceremony is performed
238 [within a period of not more] not sooner than forty-eight hours after the
239 date of application for such license and not later than sixty-five days
240 after the [date of application] issuance of such license.

241 (c) [Anyone] Any person who joins any other persons in marriage
242 without having received [such] a certified license from [them] such
243 persons shall be fined not more than one hundred dollars.

244 (d) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, in order to be valid
245 in this state, a marriage ceremony shall be conducted by_z and in the
246 physical presence of_z a person who is authorized to solemnize marriages
247 in the state.

248 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a
249 working group to examine and make recommendations concerning (1)
250 the methods of determining the number of justice of the peace positions
251 in each municipality and statewide; (2) the portability of a justice of the
252 peace appointment in one municipality to other municipalities; (3) the
253 process by which justices of the peace are selected; (4) potential training,
254 minimum qualifications, application processes and background check
255 requirements for justices of the peace; (5) oversight of justices of the
256 peace, including the potential for levying fines; (6) potential legal
257 consequences for misrepresenting a person's status as a justice of the
258 peace; and (7) issues related to human trafficking, forced marriage and
259 marriage fraud.

260 (b) The working group shall consist of the following members:

261 (1) Two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives,
262 one of whom is a justice of the peace and one of whom is a representative
263 of a professional organization for justices of the peace;

264 (2) Two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, who

265 are town clerks;

266 (3) One appointed by the majority leader of the House of
267 Representatives, who is a town party chairperson;

268 (4) One appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, who is a
269 justice of the peace and not a member of a major political party;

270 (5) Two appointed by the minority leader of the House of
271 Representatives, one of whom is a town party chairperson and one of
272 whom is a town clerk;

273 (6) Two appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, one of whom
274 is a justice of the peace and one of whom is a town clerk; and

275 (7) The Secretary of the State, or the Secretary's designee.

276 (c) All initial appointments to the working group shall be made not
277 later than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy
278 shall be filled by the appointing authority.

279 (d) The Secretary of the State, or the Secretary's designee, shall be the
280 chairperson of the working group and shall schedule the first meeting
281 of the working group, which shall be held not later than sixty days after
282 the effective date of this section.

283 (e) Not later than January 1, 2027, the working group shall submit a
284 report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing
285 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
286 relating to government administration and elections, in accordance with
287 the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, and to the
288 Secretary of the State. The working group shall terminate upon the
289 submission of such report.

<p>This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:</p>
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Section 1	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>January 1, 2027</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>January 1, 2027</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	9-184c
Sec. 6	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	46b-25
Sec. 7	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	46b-24
Sec. 8	<i>from passage</i>	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To (1) require the Secretary of the State to publish a manual concerning the duties of justices of the peace, (2) prohibit misconduct by justices of the peace, (3) specify that a newly created office of justice of the peace may be filled by appointment prior to the next regular election, (4) require a forty-eight hour waiting period before the issuance of a marriage license, and (5) establish a working group concerning justices of the peace.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]