



General Assembly

**Substitute Bill No. 5509**

February Session, 2026



**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.

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

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

46 (c) The voluntary or involuntary termination, revocation or lapse of  
47 the appointment of a justice of the peace shall not interrupt or preclude  
48 an investigation into any allegation of official misconduct concerning

49 such justice of the peace under this section.

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

53 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) Notwithstanding the  
54 provisions of section 9-183b, 9-183c or 9-184c of the general statutes, as  
55 amended by this act, any vacancy in the office of a justice of the peace  
56 created by the adoption of an ordinance or charter amendment by a  
57 municipality that (1) increases the number of justices of the peace in  
58 such municipality, and (2) is effective not less than ninety-one days prior  
59 to the next quadrennial appointment of justices of the peace in the  
60 municipality, may be filled by appointment prior to the next  
61 quadrennial appointment according to the provisions of this section.

62 (b) (1) The political parties that are major political parties, as defined  
63 in subparagraph (B) of subdivision (5) of section 9-372 of the general  
64 statutes, shall be entitled to nominate an equal number of the total  
65 number of justices of the peace to fill the vacancies created by the  
66 adoption of such ordinance, except in any municipality where the  
67 number of justices of the peace to be nominated under this section is not  
68 divisible by the number of political parties entitled to nominate justices  
69 of the peace under this section, the registrars of voters shall determine  
70 by lot which of said parties may nominate one more justice of the peace  
71 than may be nominated by the other party or parties. Such nomination  
72 by such parties shall qualify a nominee to serve as a justice of the peace.

73 (2) In the event that a political party that is a major party, as defined  
74 in subparagraph (A) of subdivision (5) of section 9-372 of the general  
75 statutes, but is not a major party, as defined in subparagraph (B) of said  
76 subdivision, is entitled to nominate an individual or individuals to serve  
77 as a justice of the peace to fill any such vacancy, such party shall be  
78 entitled to nominate twenty per cent of the total number of justices of  
79 the peace to fill such vacancies, provided such percentage shall be  
80 rounded down to the nearest whole number. Such nomination by such

81 parties shall qualify a nominee to serve as a justice of the peace.

82 (c) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 9-183b, 9-183c and 9-  
83 184c of the general statutes, as amended by this act, any person  
84 appointed to fill a vacancy in the office of a justice of the peace pursuant  
85 to subsection (b) of this section shall serve until the next quadrennial  
86 appointment of justices of the peace in the municipality.

87 (d) If a vacancy in the office of a justice of the peace has been filled by  
88 appointment by a town committee, the chairperson or secretary of such  
89 town committee shall file with the town clerk a certificate of each such  
90 appointment, and the town clerk shall record the certificate with the  
91 records of the town meeting. The town clerk shall notify the Secretary  
92 of the State of any such appointment.

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

95 (a) In 1994, 1996, and quadrennially thereafter, the town clerk of each  
96 town shall appoint as justice of the peace a number of electors of the  
97 town who are not members of major parties, as defined in section 9-372,  
98 which shall not exceed (1) where no justices of the peace are selected  
99 under section 9-183c, one-third of the total number of justices of the  
100 peace in the town, or (2) where justices of the peace are selected under  
101 section 9-183c, one-third of the total number of justices of the peace in  
102 the town less the number of justices of the peace in the town selected  
103 under section 9-183c. Such percentage shall be rounded up to the nearest  
104 whole number of justices of the peace. Any such appointment shall be  
105 made upon written application submitted on or after August first and  
106 on or before November first, in such year. No person who has  
107 enrollment privileges in the town in a political party [which] that  
108 selected justices of the peace under section 9-183b or [under section] 9-  
109 183c within the period beginning three months before said August first  
110 and ending on the date the person is to be appointed under this [section]  
111 subsection, shall be eligible for such appointment. Not later than August  
112 1, 1996, and quadrennially thereafter, the town clerk shall send a written

113 notice to each incumbent justice of the peace appointed under this  
114 section. Such notice shall inform such justices of the peace of the  
115 procedures set forth in this section concerning the reappointment of  
116 such justices of the peace.

117 (b) If, on November first in such year, the number of applications for  
118 justice of the peace filed with the town clerk under subsection (a) of this  
119 section exceeds the number of justices of the peace allowed under this  
120 section, (1) each such applicant who is an incumbent justice of the peace  
121 appointed under this section shall be reappointed if there are sufficient  
122 openings and (2) the town clerk shall, on or before the fifteenth business  
123 day of November, select the remaining applicants to be appointed as  
124 justices of the peace by lot in a ceremony which shall be open to the  
125 public and held on five days' public notice. At such lottery the town  
126 clerk shall determine the order of all such remaining applications for the  
127 purpose of filling future vacancies under subsection (d) of this section.  
128 If [a] the town clerk receives a number of applications pursuant to  
129 subsection (a) of this section that is less than the number of justices of  
130 the peace that [he] the town clerk is authorized to appoint under this  
131 section in any year, [he shall not] the town clerk may only appoint [any]  
132 additional justices of the peace to fill vacancies in the office of a justice  
133 of the peace in accordance with the provisions of subsections (d) and (e)  
134 of this section.

135 (c) Justices of the peace appointed in 1994 [,] shall serve a term of two  
136 years beginning on the first Monday in 1995, and justices of the peace  
137 appointed in 1996 and thereafter shall serve a term of four years  
138 beginning on the first Monday in January in the succeeding year.

139 (d) Any vacancy in the office of any such justice of the peace, except  
140 for a vacancy described in subsection (a) of section 4 of this act, shall be  
141 filled by appointment by the town clerk of an elector qualifying under  
142 subsection (a) of this section in the order determined in the lottery held  
143 under [said] subsection (b) of this section. If no such lottery is held, or if  
144 the town clerk receives a number of applications that is less than the  
145 number of justices of the peace that the town clerk is authorized to

146 appoint under this section, such that the number of vacancies exceeds  
147 the number of remaining applicants determined in the lottery held  
148 under subsection (b) of this section, the vacancy shall [not] be filled  
149 pursuant to subsection (e) of this section.

150 (e) If no such lottery is held, or if the number of vacancies exceeds the  
151 number of remaining applicants determined in the lottery held under  
152 subsection (b) of this section, the town clerk shall issue a public notice  
153 of the number of such vacancies and the procedure for appointing new  
154 justices of the peace under this subsection. Any such appointment shall  
155 be made upon written application submitted not later than thirty days  
156 following such public notice. No person who has enrollment privileges  
157 in the town in a political party that selected justices of the peace under  
158 section 9-183b or 9-183c during the period beginning three months  
159 before the public notice under this subsection and ending on the date  
160 the person is to be appointed under this subsection shall be eligible for  
161 such appointment. If the number of applications for justice of the peace  
162 filed with the town clerk under this subsection exceeds the number of  
163 vacancies specified in the public notice, the town clerk shall, not earlier  
164 than ten days and not later than fifteen days following the close of the  
165 period for submission of such applications, select the remaining  
166 applicants to be appointed as justices of the peace by lottery in a  
167 ceremony that shall be open to the public and held not earlier than five  
168 days after the giving of public notice by the town clerk. At such lottery,  
169 the town clerk shall determine the order of all such remaining  
170 applications for the purpose of filling future vacancies under subsection  
171 (d) of this section. If a town clerk receives a number of applications  
172 under this subsection that is less than the number of justices of the peace  
173 that the town clerk is authorized to appoint under this section in any  
174 year, the town clerk shall not appoint any additional justices of the  
175 peace.

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

178 No license may be issued by the registrar until both persons have

179 appeared before the registrar and [made application] applied for a  
180 license. The registrar shall issue a license to any two persons eligible to  
181 marry under this chapter, provided no such license may be issued by  
182 the registrar sooner than forty-eight hours after the time of such  
183 application. The license shall be completed in its entirety, dated, signed  
184 and sworn to by each applicant and shall state each applicant's name,  
185 age, birthplace, residence, whether single, widowed or divorced and  
186 whether under the supervision or control of a conservator or guardian.  
187 The Social Security numbers of both persons shall be recorded in the  
188 "administrative purposes" section of the license. [If] For the purpose of  
189 determining the time of application pursuant to this section, if the  
190 license is signed and sworn to by the applicants on different dates, the  
191 later date shall be deemed the date of application.

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

194 (a) Except as provided in section 46b-28a, no persons may be joined  
195 in marriage in this state until both have complied with the provisions of  
196 this section, sections 46b-20a, 46b-25, as amended by this act, and 46b-  
197 29 to 46b-33, inclusive, and have been issued a license by the registrar  
198 for the town in which the marriage is to be celebrated, which license  
199 shall bear the certification of the registrar that the persons named  
200 therein have complied with the provisions of said sections.

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

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

210 (d) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, in order to be valid

211 in this state, a marriage ceremony shall be conducted by, and in the  
212 physical presence of, a person who is authorized to solemnize marriages  
213 in the state.

214 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a  
215 working group to examine and make recommendations concerning (1)  
216 the methods of determining the number of justice of the peace positions  
217 in each municipality and statewide; (2) the portability of a justice of the  
218 peace appointment in one municipality to other municipalities; (3) the  
219 process by which justices of the peace are selected; (4) potential training,  
220 minimum qualifications, application processes and background check  
221 requirements for justices of the peace; (5) oversight of justices of the  
222 peace, including the potential for levying fines; (6) potential legal  
223 consequences for misrepresenting a person's status as a justice of the  
224 peace; and (7) issues related to human trafficking, forced marriage and  
225 marriage fraud.

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

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

230 (2) Two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, who  
231 are town clerks;

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

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

236 (5) Two appointed by the minority leader of the House of  
237 Representatives, one of whom is a town party chairperson and one of  
238 whom is a town clerk;

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

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

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

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

249 (e) Not later than January 1, 2027, the working group shall submit a  
250 report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing  
251 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters  
252 relating to government administration and elections, in accordance with  
253 the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, and to the  
254 Secretary of the State. The working group shall terminate upon the  
255 submission of such report.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
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

**PD** Joint Favorable Subst.