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CHAPTER 20.

 NONJUDICIAL SCREENING AND ELECTION

**SECTION 2‑20‑10.** Appointment of joint committee; election of officers.

Except as otherwise provided in Sections 58‑3‑520 and 58‑3‑530, whenever an election is to be held by the General Assembly in joint session, except for members of the judiciary, a joint committee composed of eight members, four of whom must be members of the House of Representatives and four of whom must be members of the Senate, must be appointed to consider the qualifications of the candidates. Each body shall determine how its respective members are selected. Each joint committee shall meet as soon after its appointment as practicable and elect one of its members as chairman, one as secretary, and other officers as it considers desirable.

**SECTION 2‑20‑15.** Elective office; notice of vacancy.

For any office filled by election of the General Assembly for which screening is required pursuant to this chapter, except for judicial offices, the joint committee may not accept a notice of intention to seek the office from any candidate as provided by Section 2‑20‑10, until the clerk of the House or Senate, as appropriate, has certified that the proper notices required by this section have been published or provided or until the time for the publication of the notices has expired.

(1) If the office to be filled is from the State at large, a notice of the position vacancy must be forwarded to three newspapers of general circulation in the State with a request that it be published at least once a week for four consecutive weeks. If the office to be filled is from a congressional district, judicial circuit, or other area of this State less than the State at large, a notice of the position vacancy must be forwarded to three newspapers of general circulation in that district, circuit, or area with a request that it be published at least once a week for four consecutive weeks.

(2) Notices of the position vacancy also must be furnished, on or before the date of the first newspaper publication provided in item (1), in writing to any person who has informed the committee that he desires to be notified of the vacancy.

(3) If the office to be filled is from a congressional district, judicial circuit, or other area of the State but not from the State at large, notices of the position vacancy also must be provided to each member of the General Assembly representing a portion of that district, circuit, or area. If it is a position filled from the State at large, each member of the General Assembly shall receive the notice.

(4) The cost of the notification process required by this section must be absorbed and paid from the approved accounts of both houses as contained in the annual general appropriations act.

Nothing in this section prevents the joint committee from providing notices other than those required by this section, which the committee believes are appropriate.

**SECTION 2‑20‑20.** Notice of intention to seek office; investigation of candidate.

Any person wishing to seek an office, which is elected by the General Assembly, shall file a notice of intention to seek the office with the joint committee. Upon receipt of the notice of intention, the joint committee shall begin to conduct investigation of the candidate as it considers appropriate and may in the investigation utilize the services of any agency of state government. The agency shall, upon request, cooperate fully with the joint committee.

**SECTION 2‑20‑25.** Notice required when person not seeking reelection to an office elected by General Assembly; extension of filing period.

A person serving in an office elected by the General Assembly who is not seeking reelection must give written notice to the joint committee to review candidates for that office of his decision not to seek reelection. The notice must be given not less than thirty days before the last date for filing for that office. If the notice is given less than thirty days before the last date for filing for that office or if the notice is withdrawn and the person seeks reelection, the joint committee may reopen or extend, as appropriate, the time period for filing for the office. For purposes of this subsection, “person serving in an office elected by the General Assembly” includes a person serving in office as an appointee to an unexpired term.

**SECTION 2‑20‑30.** Public hearing of candidate qualifications.

Upon completion of the investigation, the chairman of the joint committee shall schedule a public hearing concerning the qualifications of the candidates. The hearing shall be conducted no later than two weeks prior to the date set in the election resolution for the election. Any person who desires to testify at the hearing, including candidates, shall furnish a written statement of his proposed testimony to the chairman of the joint committee. These statements shall be furnished no later than forty‑eight hours prior to the date and time set for the hearing. The joint committee shall determine the persons who shall testify at the hearing. All testimony, including documents furnished to the joint committee, shall be submitted under oath and persons knowingly furnishing false information either orally or in writing shall be subject to the penalties provided by law for perjury and false swearing. During the course of the investigation, the joint committee may schedule an executive session at which each candidate, and other persons whom the committee wishes to interview, may be interviewed by the joint committee on matters pertinent to the candidate’s qualification for the office to be filled. A reasonable time thereafter the committee shall render its tentative findings as to whether the candidate is qualified for the office to be filled and its reasons therefor as to each candidate.

As soon as possible after the completion of the hearing, a verbatim copy of the testimony, documents submitted at the hearing, and findings of fact shall be transcribed and published in the journals of both houses or otherwise made available in a reasonable number of copies to the members of both houses prior to the date of the scheduled election, and a copy thereof shall be furnished to each candidate.

A candidate may withdraw at any stage of the proceedings, and in this event no further inquiry, report on, or consideration of his candidacy shall be made.

**SECTION 2‑20‑35.** Election of trustee of college or university; consideration of applicants by joint review committee.

Where a vacancy on a board of trustees of a college or university of this State, requiring election by the General Assembly to fill, has occurred for any reason other than expiration of the term and is unfilled at the beginning of an annual session of the General Assembly, a joint review committee to consider applicants for this vacancy and others of similar circumstances must be appointed within six legislative days after the annual session of the General Assembly convenes, and the election to fill this vacancy must occur within six weeks after the joint review committee is appointed unless no candidates for the office are offering for election who have been reviewed by the committee.

**SECTION 2‑20‑40.** Dispensation of public hearing on recommendation of joint committee; unopposed candidate.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this chapter, when there is no known opposition to a candidate, and there appears to be no substantial reason for having a public hearing, whether or not the candidate be an incumbent, and no request is made by at least ten members of the House of Representatives and five members of the Senate for a public hearing, the joint committee chairman upon recommendation of the joint committee may determine that a public hearing is unnecessary and shall not be held, but no election shall be held prior to this determination.

**SECTION 2‑20‑50.** Confidentiality of records and other fact finding materials.

All records, information, and other material that the joint committee has obtained or used to make its findings of fact, except materials, records, and information presented under oath at the public hearing, shall be kept strictly confidential. After the joint committee has reported its findings of fact, or after a candidate withdraws his name from consideration, all records, information, and material required to be kept confidential shall be destroyed.

**SECTION 2‑20‑60.** Powers of joint committee in discharge of investigatory duties; subpoena and contempt powers.

The joint committee in the discharge of its duties may administer oaths and affirmations, take depositions, and issue subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of books, papers, correspondence, memoranda, and other records considered necessary in connection with the investigation of the joint committee.

No person shall be excused from attending and testifying or from producing books, papers, correspondence, memoranda, or other records before the joint committee on the ground that the testimony or evidence, documentary or otherwise, required of him may tend to incriminate him or subject him to a penalty or forfeiture. However, no individual shall be prosecuted or subjected to any criminal penalty based upon testimony or evidence submitted or forfeiture for or on account of any transaction, matter, or thing concerning which he is compelled, after having claimed his privilege against self‑incrimination, to testify or produce evidence, documentary or otherwise, except that the individual so testifying shall not be exempt from prosecution and punishment for perjury and false swearing committed in so testifying.

In case of contumacy by any person or refusal to obey a subpoena issued to any person, any circuit court of this State or circuit judge thereof within the jurisdiction of which the person guilty of contumacy or refusal to obey is found, resides, or transacts business, upon application by the joint committee may issue to the person an order requiring him to appear before the joint committee to produce evidence if so ordered or to give testimony touching the matter under investigation. Any failure to obey an order of the court may be punished as a contempt hereof. Subpoenas shall be issued in the name of the joint committee and shall be signed by the joint committee chairman. Subpoenas shall be issued to those persons as the joint committee may designate.

**SECTION 2‑20‑70.** Privilege of the floor during candidate’s pending application or election; restrictions.

The privilege of the floor in either house of the General Assembly may not be granted to any candidate, or any immediate family member of a candidate unless the family member is serving in the General Assembly, during the time the candidate’s application is pending before the joint committee and during the time his election is pending in the General Assembly.