

Code of Laws of South Carolina 1976
Title 2. General Assembly
Chapter 19. Election of Justices and Judges

§ 2-19-70. Prohibition against dual offices, privileges of the floor, and pledges.

(A) No member of the General Assembly may be elected to a judicial office while he is serving in the General Assembly nor shall that person be elected to a judicial office for a period of one year after he either:

(1) ceases to be a member of the General Assembly; or

(2) fails to file for election to the General Assembly in accordance with Section 7-11-15.

(B) 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 commission and during the time his nomination by the commission for election to a particular judicial office is pending in the General Assembly.

(C) No person may seek, directly or indirectly, the pledge of a member of the General Assembly's vote or, directly or indirectly, contact a member of the General Assembly regarding screening for the judicial office until the qualifications of all candidates for that office have been determined by the Judicial Merit Selection Commission and the commission has formally released its report as to the qualifications of all candidates for the vacancy to the General Assembly. No member of the General Assembly may offer his pledge to any person until the qualifications of all candidates for that office have been determined by the Judicial Merit Selection Commission and until the commission has formally released its report as to the qualifications of its nominees to the General Assembly. The formal release of the report of qualifications shall occur no earlier than twelve days after the nominees have been initially released to members of the General Assembly. For purposes of this section, indirectly seeking a pledge means the candidate, or someone acting on behalf of and at the request of the candidate, requesting a person to contact a member of the General Assembly on behalf of the candidate before nominations for that office are formally made by the commission. Prior to the formal release of the report as to the qualifications of judicial candidates, a person may not request that a member of the General Assembly, nor may a member of the General Assembly offer to, act on behalf of a candidate in furtherance of the candidate's candidacy in any capacity including, but not limited to, acting as a vote counter for a candidate. The prohibitions of this section do not extend to an announcement of candidacy by a person and statements by the candidate detailing the candidate's qualifications.

(D) No member of the General Assembly may trade anything of value, including pledges to vote for legislation or for other candidates now or in the future, in exchange for another member's pledge to vote for a candidate for judicial office or as an inducement for a candidate to withdraw.

(E) Violations of this section may be considered by the merit selection commission when it considers the candidate's qualifications and until the time set for election of candidates. Violations

of this section by members of the General Assembly shall be reported by the commission to the House or Senate Ethics Committee, as may be applicable. Violations of this section by nonlegislative commission members shall be reported by the commission to the State Ethics Commission. A violation of this section is a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, the violator must be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than ninety days. Cases tried under this section may not be transferred from general sessions court pursuant to Section 22-3-545.

HISTORY: 1990 Act No. 610, Part IV, Section 6; 1993 Act No. 181, Section 29; 1996 Act No. 391, Part I, Section 1; 1998 Act No. 388, Section 3; 2024 Act No. 219 (S.1046), Section 1, eff July 1, 2025.

Effect of Amendment

2024 Act No. 219, Section 1, rewrote (C); in (D), inserted "now or in the future" and "or as an inducement for a candidate to withdraw"; and in (E), in the first sentence, inserted "and until the time set for election of candidates".

. . . .