**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING ARTICLE 6 TO CHAPTER 5, TITLE 7 SO AS TO CREATE THE ELECTIONS STUDY COMMISSION, TO PROVIDE FOR ITS DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, TO PROVIDE FOR ITS MEMBERSHIP, TO PROVIDE FOR APPOINTMENT OF ITS MEMBERS AND ELECTION OF ITS CHAIRMAN, TO PROVIDE FOR THE TERMS OF ITS MEMBERS, AND TO REQUIRE THE COMMISSION TO MAKE A REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WITHIN NINETY DAYS OF EACH GENERAL ELECTION CONTAINING RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE CITIZEN‑INFORMED PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 5, Title 7 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 6

Elections Study Commission

Section 7‑5‑510. (A) The Elections Study Commission is created to investigate barriers to registration and voting, error rates and voting machine reliability, review state expenditures and federal grants related to voting, and propose ways to make the electoral system more efficient, accurate, verifiable, and accessible.

(B) The Governor shall appoint a thirteen‑member commission, two members from each congressional district and one member at large. The Governor shall consider race and gender diversity in appointing the members. The appointments must be made from nominations submitted by nonpartisan voting rights organizations, as recognized by the Secretary of State and the United States Internal Revenue Service. The commission members shall choose a chair from among the members.

(C) Commission members shall serve for four‑year terms and may be removed, for cause, by a majority vote of the commission. One initial appointment from each congressional district, determined alphabetically, must be for a two‑year term. A vacancy must be filled in the manner of the original appointment.

(D) A vacancy on the commission must be announced thirty days before the election in prominent newspapers in the respective counties and through nongovernmental organizations that do nonpartisan voter advocacy work.

(E) The commission shall meet at least four times a year at times and locations to be determined by the commission chair. The commission may form subcommittees and hold public hearings and meetings as determined by the committee chair or subcommittee chairs.

(F) Commission members shall act as Voting Rights Ombudsmen for their respective congressional districts. County election commissions and entities charged by law with registration of electors shall make the contact information of their congressional district’s ombudsmen available to citizens with complaints regarding voter registration and elections.

(G) The commission shall make a report to the Governor and the General Assembly within ninety days of each general election containing recommendations to improve citizen‑informed participation in the electoral process.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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