**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 30, CHAPTER 20, TITLE 2, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY AMENDING SECTION 30, SO AS TO PROVIDE A TIME FOR CANDIDATES TO OBTAIN PLEDGES OR COMMITMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AFTER PUBLICATION OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE’S FINDINGS ON THE CANDIDATES AND TO SET A TIME FOR THE ELECTION OF THE CANDIDATES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 30, Chapter 20, Title 2 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 2-20-30. 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 in a report which includes whether the candidate is qualified for the office to be filled and its reasons therefor as to each candidate. A candidate nominee may not obtain a pledge or commitment until noon, on the twelfth day after the nominees found qualified have been released in a report to members of the General Assembly.

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 period of at least twenty-two days must elapse between the date of the joint commission’s report of nominations to the General Assembly and the date the General Assembly conducts elections for these nonjudicial offices.

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. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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