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Candidate Name Modifications
 2026 GENERAL SESSION
 STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: Stephanie Pitcher
 House Sponsor:

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LONG TITLE

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General Description:

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This bill addresses the appearance of a candidate's name on a ballot.

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Highlighted Provisions:

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This bill:

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▸ modifies the conditions and requirements for a ballot to list a candidate using a variation of the candidate's name or a nickname.

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Money Appropriated in this Bill:

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None

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Other Special Clauses:

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None

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Utah Code Sections Affected:

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AMENDS:

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20A-6-109, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 39

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Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

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Section 1. Section **20A-6-109** is amended to read:

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20A-6-109 . Appearance of candidate's name on ballot -- Name variations --

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Appeal.

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(1) As used in this section:

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(a) "Variation of a candidate's name" means a name:

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(i) that varies from the candidate's legal first name followed by the candidate's legal surname; and

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(ii) by which the candidate is known in the county in which the candidate resides.

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(b) "Variation of a candidate's name" includes the following, if the candidate is known by the variation in the county in which the candidate resides:

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(i) using the candidate's legal middle name in addition to, or instead of, the candidate's legal first name;

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- 31 (ii) using the initial or initials of a legal first name or a legal middle name instead of
 32 the full name;
- 33 (iii) a variation of the order of a candidate's names or initials, if the names or initials
 34 are permitted under this section;
- 35 (iv) adding a suffix that is a true representation of the candidate, including Junior, Jr.,
 36 Senior, Sr., or I, II, or III;
- 37 (v) using another surname by which the candidate is known in the county where the
 38 candidate resides, either in place of, or in addition to, the candidate's legal
 39 surname, including:
- 40 (A) the candidate's maiden last name;
- 41 (B) the last name of the candidate's spouse; or
- 42 (C) the last name of a parent or step-parent of the candidate;
- 43 (vi) using a common nickname of the legal first name, or of the legal middle name, of
 44 the candidate, by which the candidate is known; or
- 45 (vii) using a nickname, other than a nickname described in Subsection (1)(b)(vi):
- 46 (A) in place of the candidate's legal first name or legal middle name; or
- 47 (B) in addition to the candidate's name.
- 48 [~~(1)~~] (2) Except as [~~otherwise provided in this section~~] provided in Subsection (3), an
 49 election officer shall ensure that a candidate's name appears on the ballot with the
 50 candidate's legal first name, followed by the candidate's legal surname.
- 51 [~~(2)~~] An election officer shall place on the ballot a candidate's legal middle name, or a
 52 common derivative of the candidate's legal middle name, in place of the candidate's legal
 53 first name, if:]
- 54 [~~(a)~~] the candidate normally uses the candidate's legal middle name, or the common
 55 derivative, instead of the candidate's legal first name; and]
- 56 [~~(b)~~] no later than 5 p.m. on the day on which the applicable declaration of candidacy
 57 period ends, the candidate files with the election officer:]
- 58 [~~(i)~~] a request that the election officer place on the ballot the candidate's legal middle
 59 name, or a common derivative of the candidate's legal middle name, instead of the
 60 candidate's legal first name, specifying the candidate's legal middle name, or the
 61 common derivative of the candidate's legal middle name;]
- 62 [~~(ii)~~] an affidavit signed by the candidate in which the candidate states, under penalty
 63 of perjury, that the candidate is generally known by acquaintances in the
 64 candidate's county of residence by the legal middle name, or the common

65 derivative of the legal middle name, specified in the request described in
 66 Subsection (2)(b)(i), and stated in the affidavit, instead of the candidate's legal
 67 first name; and]

68 [(iii) an affidavit signed by five residents of the candidate's county of residence who
 69 are not immediate family members of the candidate stating, under penalty of
 70 perjury, that the candidate is generally known by acquaintances in the candidate's
 71 county of residence by the legal middle name, or the common derivative of the
 72 legal middle name, specified in the request described in Subsection (2)(b)(i), and
 73 stated in the affidavit, instead of the candidate's legal first name.]

74 [(3) Subject to Subsection (4), an election officer shall place a candidate's nickname on a
 75 ballot, if:]

76 [(a) the election officer determines that the nickname:]

77 [(i) does not imply that the candidate is an individual other than the candidate,
 78 regardless of whether the individual is living or deceased;]

79 [(ii) does not constitute a slogan;]

80 [(iii) does not associate the candidate with an economic, religious, political, or other
 81 group, issue, or opinion;]

82 [(iv) is not offensive, profane, or spurious; and]

83 [(v) is not a title, rank, degree, certification, job description, or similar designation;
 84 and]

85 [(b) no later than 5 p.m. on the day on which the applicable declaration of candidacy
 86 period ends, the candidate files with the election officer:]

87 [(i) a request that the election officer place the candidate's nickname on the ballot,
 88 specifying the desired nickname and, in accordance with Subsection (4), the
 89 desired placement of the nickname;]

90 [(ii) an affidavit signed by the candidate in which the candidate states, under penalty
 91 of perjury, that the candidate:]

92 [(A) is generally known by acquaintances in the candidate's county of residence
 93 by the nickname specified in the request described in Subsection (3)(b)(i) and
 94 stated in the affidavit; and]

95 [(B) is not using the nickname to gain an advantage on the ballot; and]

96 [(iii) an affidavit signed by five residents of the candidate's county of residence who
 97 are not immediate family members of the candidate stating, under penalty of
 98 perjury, that the candidate is generally known by acquaintances in the candidate's

- 99 county of residence by the nickname specified in the request described in
 100 Subsection (3)(b)(i) and stated in the affidavit.]
- 101 [~~(4) If, under Subsection (3), an election officer places a candidate's nickname on the ballot,
 102 the candidate may choose one of the following:]~~
- 103 [~~(a) to place the nickname on the ballot before or after the candidate's legal first name;]~~
- 104 [~~(b) to place the nickname on the ballot before or after the candidate's legal middle
 105 name, if the candidate's legal middle name appears on the ballot under Subsection (2)
 106 or (7); or]~~
- 107 [~~(c) to place the nickname on the ballot in place of the candidate's legal first name.]~~
- 108 [(5) ~~An election officer may, without requiring compliance with Subsection (3), approve a
 109 written request filed with the election officer no later than 5 p.m. on the day on which
 110 the applicable declaration of candidacy period ends, to:]~~
- 111 [~~(a) place on the ballot a nickname instead of a legal first name, if the nickname is a
 112 common derivative of the legal first name;]~~
- 113 [~~(b) place on the ballot the first initial of a legal middle name between a legal first name,
 114 or a common derivative of the legal first name, and a legal last name; or]~~
- 115 [~~(c) place on the ballot the first initial of a legal first name before a legal middle name,
 116 or a common derivative of the legal middle name, if the candidate's legal middle
 117 name, or a common derivative of the legal middle name, appears on the ballot under
 118 Subsection (2) or (7).]~~
- 119 (3) An election officer shall place a variation of the candidate's name on the ballot if, no
 120 later than 5 p.m. on the day on which the applicable declaration of candidacy period
 121 ends:
- 122 (a) the candidate requests, in writing, that the variation appear on the ballot;
- 123 (b) for a variation of the candidate's name described in Subsection (1)(b)(v), the
 124 candidate submits, with the request described in Subsection (3)(a), an affidavit signed
 125 by the candidate in which the candidate states, under penalty of perjury, that the
 126 variation of the candidate's name:
- 127 (i) is a name by which the candidate is known in the county where the candidate
 128 resides; and
- 129 (ii) is:
- 130 (A) the candidate's maiden last name;
- 131 (B) the last name of the candidate's spouse; or
- 132 (C) the last name of a parent or step-parent of the candidate; or

- 133 (c) for a variation of the candidate's name that is a nickname described in Subsection
 134 (1)(b)(vii):
- 135 (i) the candidate submits, with the request described in Subsection (3)(a):
- 136 (A) an affidavit signed by the candidate in which the candidate states, under
 137 penalty of perjury, that the candidate is generally known by the nickname in
 138 the county where the candidate resides; and
- 139 (B) an affidavit signed by five residents of the candidate's county of residence
 140 who are not immediate family members of the candidate stating, under penalty
 141 of perjury, that the candidate is generally known by the nickname in the
 142 county where the candidate resides; and
- 143 (ii) the election officer determines that the nickname:
- 144 (A) does not imply that the candidate is an individual other than the candidate,
 145 regardless of whether the individual is living or deceased;
- 146 (B) does not constitute a slogan;
- 147 (C) does not associate the candidate with an economic, religious, political, or
 148 other group, issue, or opinion;
- 149 (D) is not offensive, profane, or spurious;
- 150 (E) is not a title, rank, degree, certification, job description, or similar designation;
 151 and
- 152 (F) is not being used to gain the candidate an unfair political advantage.
- 153 [(6)] (4)(a) An election officer shall approve or reject a request filed under Subsection [
 154 (2)(b), (3)(b), or (5)] (3)(a) within five business days after the day on which the
 155 election officer receives the request.
- 156 (b) Failure by an election officer to timely comply with Subsection [(6)(a)] (4)(a) is
 157 considered a rejection of the request.
- 158 (c) If an election officer rejects a request described in Subsection [(6)(a)] (4)(a) or fails to
 159 timely comply with Subsection [(6)(a)] (4)(a), the candidate may, within five days
 160 after the day of the rejection or, if the election officer fails to timely comply with
 161 Subsection [(6)(a)] (4)(a), within five days after the day of the deadline described in
 162 Subsection [(6)(a)] (4)(a), appeal the rejection to a court with jurisdiction.
- 163 [(7)] (5) If two or more candidates for the same office have the same or similar names, the
 164 election officer may do one of the following, to the extent the election officer determines
 165 necessary, to differentiate between the candidates:
- 166 (a) for one or more of the candidates, include the candidate's legal middle name, in

167 addition to the candidate's legal first name and legal last name; or
168 (b) negotiate another manner of differentiation with the candidates who have the same or
169 similar names.

170 [(8)] (6) Regardless of whether an election officer approves placement of a variation of a
171 candidate's name on the ballot[~~in a manner other than the candidate's legal first name~~
172 ~~followed by the candidate's legal last name~~], the candidate's legal name will be used to
173 determine the order of placement on the ballot under Section 20A-6-110.

174 Section 2. **Effective Date.**

175 This bill takes effect on May 6, 2026.