

§ 163-237. Certain violations of absentee ballot law made criminal offenses.

(a) False Statements under Oath Made Class 1 Misdemeanor. – If any person shall willfully and falsely make any affidavit or statement, under oath, which affidavit or statement under oath, is required to be made by the provisions of this Article, that person shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(b) False Statements Not under Oath Made Class 1 Misdemeanor. – Except as provided by G.S. 163-275(16), if any person, for the purpose of obtaining or voting any official ballot under the provisions of this Article, shall willfully sign any printed or written false statement which does not purport to be under oath, or which, if it purports to be under oath, was not duly sworn to, that person shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(c) Candidate Witnessing Absentee Ballots of Nonrelative Made Class 1 Misdemeanor. – A person is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor if that person acts as a witness under G.S. 163-231(a) in any primary or election in which the person is a candidate for nomination or election, unless the voter is the candidate's near relative as defined in G.S. 163-226(f).

(d) Fraud in Connection with Absentee Vote; Forgery. – Any person attempting to aid and abet fraud in connection with any absentee vote cast or to be cast, under the provisions of this Article, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. Attempting to vote by fraudulently signing the name of a regularly qualified voter is a Class G felony.

(d1) Sell or Attempt to Sell Completed Absentee Ballot. – Any person who sells or attempts to sell, or purchases or agrees to purchase, a completed written request, a completed application for absentee ballots, or voted absentee ballots, shall be guilty of a Class I felony.

(d2) Destruction of Absentee Ballot. – Any person who intentionally, with the intent of obstructing a vote by a registered voter, fails to deliver or intentionally destroys a completed written request, a completed application for absentee ballots, or voted absentee ballots, shall be guilty of a Class G felony.

(d3) Copies or Retention of Identifying Information. – Any person, other than the voter or near relative or verifiable legal guardian of that voter, who copies or otherwise retains the request for absentee ballots, a completed application for absentee ballots, or any identifying information, as defined in G.S. 14-113.20, disclosed in a request or application, shall be guilty of a Class G felony.

(d4) Compensation Based on Requests. – Any person who compensates another, or who accepts compensation, based on the number of returned written requests for absentee ballots under G.S. 163-230.2, shall be guilty of a Class I felony.

(d5) Intent to Unlawfully Influence. – Any person who commits, attempts to commit, or conspires to commit a crime identified in G.S. 163-82.6(b), 163-226.3(a), 163-274, 163-275, or this section with the intent to unlawfully influence or interfere with a primary or election, or to otherwise unlawfully gain, shall be guilty of a Class F felony.

(d6) Disclosure of Register of Absentee Ballot Requests. – Notwithstanding G.S. 132-3(a), any person who steals, releases, or possesses the official register of absentee requests for mail-in absentee ballots as provided in G.S. 163-228 prior to the opening of the voting place in accordance with G.S. 163-166.25, for a purpose other than the conduct of business at the county board of elections, shall be guilty of a Class G felony.

(d7) Sending of Unrequested Absentee Ballot. – Any member serving on the State Board or on any county board of elections, or any employee of the State Board or a county board of elections, who knowingly sends or delivers an absentee ballot to any person who has not requested an absentee ballot in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes shall be guilty of a Class I felony.

(e) Violations Not Otherwise Provided for Made Class 1 Misdemeanors. – If any person shall willfully violate any of the provisions of this Article, or willfully fail to comply with any of the provisions thereof, for which no other punishment is herein provided, that person shall be

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guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. (1929, c. 164, s. 40; 1939, c. 159, ss. 12, 13, 15; 1967, c. 775, s. 1; 1977, c. 469, s. 1, 1985, c. 562, s. 6; 1987, c. 565, s. 8; 1993, c. 539, ss. 1106, 1324; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1999-455, s. 22; 2014-111, s. 15(b); 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-146, s. 3.1(a), (b); 2019-239, s. 1.5(a); 2020-17, s. 8(a); 2023-140, s. 35.)