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**SENATE BILL NO. 485**

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled January 9, 2024

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 3 of Title 40.1 a section numbered 40.1-28.7:11, relating to employee protections; employer-sponsored meetings on political matters; civil action.*

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Patron—Carroll Foy

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Referred to Committee on Commerce and Labor

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 1 of Chapter 3 of Title 40.1 a section numbered 40.1-28.7:11 as follows:**

**§ 40.1-28.7:11. Employer-sponsored meetings on political matters; civil action.**

A. As used in this section, "political matters" means matters relating to elections for political office; political parties; legislative, regulatory, or public policy proposals; or the decision to join or support any political party or political, civic, community, fraternal, or labor organization.

B. No employer shall discharge, discipline, retaliate against, or threaten to discharge, discipline, or retaliate against, or take any adverse employment action against an employee:

1. Because such employee declines to attend or participate in an employer-sponsored meeting or declines to receive or listen to a communication from the employer if the purpose of such meeting or communication is to convey an opinion about political matters;

2. As a means of inducing such employee to attend or participate in a meeting or receive or listen to a communication as described in subdivision 1; or

3. Because such employee, or a person acting on behalf of such employee, makes a report in good faith, orally or in writing, of a suspected violation of this section.

C. An employee who alleges a violation of this section may bring a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction within 90 days after such violation occurs. The court may order as a remedy to such employee all appropriate relief, including injunctive relief, the reinstatement of such employee to the same position held before the violation or to an equivalent position, and compensation for lost wages, benefits, and other remuneration, together with interest thereon, as well as reasonable attorney fees and costs.

D. Every employer shall post in the same location where other employee notices required by state or federal law are posted a notice of employee rights under this section.

E. Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

1. Prohibit communications of information that an employer is required by law to communicate;

2. Limit the right of an employer to conduct meetings involving political matters or to communicate about such matters, so long as employee attendance at such meetings or receipt of such communications is wholly voluntary; or

3. Limit the right of an employer to communicate to an employee or require an employee's attendance at meetings or events regarding information that is necessary for such employee to perform his job duties.

INTRODUCED

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