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Indicates New Matter

FREE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT ADOPTED -- NOT PRINTED

May 12, 2020

**S. 635**

Introduced by Senator Young

S. Printed 3/11/20--S.

Read the first time March 12, 2019.

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND CHAPTER 3, TITLE 56 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION AND LICENSING, BY ADDING ARTICLE 147, TO PROVIDE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES MAY ISSUE “DRIVERS FOR A CURE” SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES.

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

SECTION 1.A. Section 7‑13‑35 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7‑13‑35. The authority charged by law with conducting an election must publish two notices of general, municipal, special, and primary elections held in the county in a newspaper of general circulation in the county or municipality, as appropriate. Included in each notice must be a reminder of the last day persons may register to be eligible to vote in the election for which notice is given, notification of the date, time, and location of the hearing on ballots challenged in the election, a list of the precincts involved in the election, the location of the polling places in each of the precincts, and notification that the process of examining the return‑addressed envelopes containing absentee ballots may begin at ~~2:00 p.m.~~ 9:00 a.m. on the calendar day immediately preceding election day at a place designated in the notice by the authority charged with conducting the election. The first notice must appear not later than sixty days before the election and the second notice must appear not later than two weeks after the first notice.”

B. Section 7‑15‑420 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7‑15‑420. (A) The county board of voter registration and elections, municipal election commission, or executive committee of each municipal party in the case of municipal primary elections is responsible for the tabulation and reporting of absentee ballots.

(B) At 9:00 a.m. on the calendar day immediately preceding election day, the managers appointed pursuant to Section 7‑5‑10, and in the presence of any watchers who have been appointed pursuant to Section 7‑13‑860, may begin the process of examining the return‑addressed envelopes that have been received by the county board of voter registration and elections making certain that each oath has been properly signed and witnessed and includes the address of the witness. All return‑addressed envelopes received by the county board of voter registration and elections before the time for closing the polls must be examined in this manner. A ballot may not be counted unless the oath is properly signed and witnessed nor may any ballot be counted which is received by the county board of voter registration and elections after time for closing of the polls. The printed instructions required by Section 7‑15‑370(2) to be sent each absentee ballot applicant must notify him that his vote will not be counted in either of these events. If a ballot is not challenged, the sealed return‑addressed envelope must be opened by the managers, and the enclosed envelope marked ‘Ballot Herein’ removed and placed in a locked box or boxes.

(C) After all return‑addressed envelopes have been emptied ~~in this manner~~, but no earlier than 9:00 a.m. on election day, the managers shall remove the ballots contained in the envelopes marked ‘Ballot Herein’, placing each one in the ballot box provided for the applicable contest.

(D) Beginning at 9:00 a.m. on election day, the absentee ballots may be tabulated, including any absentee ballots received on election day before the polls are closed. If any ballot is challenged, the return‑addressed envelope must not be opened, but must be put aside and the procedure set forth in Section 7‑13‑830 must be utilized; but the absentee voter must be given reasonable notice of the challenged ballot. Results of the tabulation must not be publicly reported until after the polls are closed.”

C. Section 7‑15‑470 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7‑15‑470. (A) Notwithstanding the provisions of this chapter, a county board of voter registration and elections may use other methods of voting by absentee ballot instead of by paper ballot. No voting machine or voting system, other than a paper‑based system, may be used for in‑person absentee voting that has not received written certification from the State Election Commission that:

(1) the voting machine or voting system meets all statutory requirements for use in the State; ~~and certification that~~

(2) the voting machine or voting system can be secured against voting at times other than business hours of the county board of voter registration and elections~~, that~~; and

(3) the results of elections can be held secure from release until the time for counting ballots at any polling place~~, and votes cast using the machine can be challenged and held secure until the hearing on challenged ballots required by Section 7‑13‑830 is held~~.

(B) The State Election Commission must develop standards and guidelines for these purposes.”

D. The State Election Commission is directed to implement a software update to its electronic voting machines to allow for challenges to absentee votes cast using the machines in an equivalent manner to challenges to absentee votes cast on electronic voting machines in the 2018 General Election.

E. Section 7‑15‑330 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7‑15‑330. To vote by absentee ballot, a qualified elector or a member of his immediate family must request an application to vote by absentee ballot in person, by telephone, or by mail from the county board of voter registration and elections, or at an extension office of the board of voter registration and elections as established by the county governing body, for the county of the voter’s residence. A person requesting an application for a qualified elector as the qualified elector’s authorized representative must request an application to vote by absentee ballot in person or by mail only and must himself be a registered voter and must sign an oath to the effect that he fits the statutory definition of a representative. This signed oath must be kept on file with the board of voter registration and elections until the end of the calendar year or until all contests concerning a particular election have been finally determined, whichever is later. A candidate or a member of a candidate’s paid campaign staff, including volunteers reimbursed for time expended on campaign activity, is not allowed to request applications for absentee voting for any person designated in this section unless the person is a member of the immediate family. A request for an application to vote by absentee ballot may be made anytime during the calendar year in which the election in which the qualified elector desires to be permitted to vote by absentee ballot is being held. However, completed applications must be returned to the county board of voter registration and elections in person or by mail before 5:00 p.m. on the fourth day before the day of the election. Applications must be accepted by the county board of voter registration and elections until 5:00 p.m. on the day immediately preceding the election for those who appear in person and are qualified to vote absentee pursuant to Section 7‑15‑320. A member of the immediate family of a person who is admitted to a hospital as an emergency patient on the day of an election or within a four‑day period before the election may obtain an application from the board on the day of an election, complete it, receive the ballot, deliver it personally to the patient who shall vote, and personally carry the ballot back to the board of voter registration and elections. The board of voter registration and elections shall serially number each absentee ballot application form and keep a record book in which must be recorded the number of the form, the name, home address, and absentee mailing address of the person for whom the absentee ballot application form is requested; the name, address, voter registration number, and relationship of the person requesting the form, if other than the applicant; the date upon which the form is requested; ~~and~~ the date upon which the form is issued; and the date and method upon which the absentee ballot is returned. This information becomes a public record at 9:00 a.m. on the day immediately preceding the election, except that forms issued for emergency hospital patients must be made public by 9:00 a.m. on the day following an election. A person who violates the provisions of this section is subject to the penalties provided in Section 7‑25‑170.”

F. Section 7‑15‑440 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7‑15‑440. The county board of voter registration and elections shall, after each election, prepare a list of all persons to whom absentee ballots were issued and all persons who cast absentee ballots. The list so compiled shall be made available for public inspection upon request. This list is in addition to the information provided pursuant to Section 7‑15‑330.”

G. Chapter 13, Title 7 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 7‑13‑825. The State Election Commission and each county board of voter registration and elections must post the requirements to challenge a ballot pursuant to the provisions of Section 7‑13‑810 in a conspicuous location in their respective offices and on their respective websites.”

H. The amendments contained in subsections A., B., and C. of this SECTION are repealed on December 31, 2021, and the text of these code sections therefore shall revert back to the language as contained in the South Carolina Code of Laws as of January 23, 2020.

SECTION 2. A. A qualified elector must be permitted to vote by absentee ballot in an election if the qualified elector’s place of residence or polling place is located in an area subject to a state of emergency declared by the Governor and there are fewer than forty‑six days remaining until the date of the election.

B. This SECTION takes effect upon approval by the Governor and expires on July 1, 2020.

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

/s/Sen. Brad Hutto /s/Rep. J. Gary Simrill

/s/Sen. George E. “Chip” Campsen III /s/Rep. James Todd Rutherford

/s/Sen. A. Shane Massey /s/Rep. Gary E. Clary

On Part of the Senate. On Part of the House.

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