



New Legislation 2021

Prepared by
Secretary of the State
of Connecticut
Elections Division
(Rev 7/7/21)

Summary

June 2021 SS Public Act No. 21-2

§§ 87-91 — ELECTRONIC SYSTEM FOR TRANSMITTING VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATIONS

Summary

Requires DMV, voter registration agencies, and public higher education institutions to use a secretary of the state-approved and NVRA-compliant electronic system to automatically transmit voter registration applications for qualified applicants to registrars of voters unless an applicant declines to apply for admission. (In practice, DMV is already doing this under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the SOTS and DMV).

Description

By law, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) commissioner must include a voter registration application as part of each motor vehicle driver's license application or renewal or each identity card application. Similarly, voter registration agencies must include a voter registration application with each service or assistance application, recertification, renewal, or change of address. Public higher education institutions must distribute mail voter registration application forms.

In practice, any agency that does allow for electronic voter registration will be integrated into the CVRS system so the user interface for Registrars of Voters will not change.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except that the changes affecting voter registration agencies and public higher education institutions are effective January 1, 2022.

§ 92 — E-SIGNATURE SYSTEM FOR ELECTIONS FORMS

Summary

Requires the secretary of the state to implement an e-signature system for most elections-related forms and applications.

Description

The bill requires the secretary of the state to develop and implement one or more systems through which she may allow individuals to submit an electronic signature to sign elections-related forms and applications, other than those for campaign finance purposes. It gives the secretary the discretion to determine the forms or applications included in the system. Under the bill, any form or application with such an electronic signature appearing on it is deemed to have the original signature.

The bill requires a state agency to provide any information to the secretary, upon her request, that she deems necessary to maintain the system or systems. The bill prohibits the secretary from using the information obtained from any state agency except for purposes of the elections-related e-signature system.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 93 — DISTRIBUTING VOTER REGISTRATION INFORMATION AT HIGH SCHOOLS

Summary

Requires registrars of voters to annually distribute voter registration information at public high schools

Description

By law, registrars of voters must hold a voter registration session between January 1 and the last day of school in each public high school in the municipality. In regional school districts, registrars of each member municipality hold the sessions on a rotating basis.

The bill requires registrars of voters to annually distribute information, on the fourth Tuesday in September, at each public high school about the qualifications and procedures for registering to vote. Under the bill, registrars and the principal of any public high school must determine the best distribution method. (Presumably, in regional school districts, registrars would distribute information on a rotating basis.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 94 — TIME OFF TO VOTE

Summary

Requires employers to give an employee two hours of unpaid time off for state elections and certain special elections if he or she requests it in advance

Description

The bill requires employers, through June 30, 2024, to give an employee two hours of unpaid time off from his or her regularly-scheduled work on the day of a regular state election to vote, if the employee requests it in advance. In the case of a special election for a U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, state senator, or state representative, the requirement applies only to employees who are already electors.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 95 — COMPETENCY TO VOTE

Summary

The bill eliminates a reference to mentally incompetent people being admitted as electors.

Description

The bill retains existing law's procedure for determining voting competency at the request of a person's guardian or conservator. Under this procedure, a person's guardian or conservator may file a petition in

probate court to determine his or her competency to vote in a primary, election, or referendum. The court must hold a hearing no later than 15 days after the filing date, and the hearing must receive priority for trial (CGS § 45a-703).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 96-98 — VOTING RIGHTS FOR INDIVIDUALS CONVICTED OF A FELONY

Summary

Reduces the forfeiture of convicted felons' electoral privileges (i.e., voting rights) to only those situations where the individual is committed to confinement in an in-state or out-of-state prison. It also restores the privileges of convicted felons who are on parole or special parole or who are confined in a community residence

Description

Forfeiture of Electoral Privileges (§ 97)

Under current law, an individual forfeits his or her right to be an elector, and all accompanying electoral privileges (i.e., the right to vote, run for public office, and hold an office), upon conviction of a felony and commitment to any state or federal prison (CGS § 9-46). Effective July 1, 2021, the bill eliminates the requirement that such individuals forfeit their electoral privileges if they are committed to Department of Correction (DOC) custody (or a state or county correction department outside of Connecticut) for confinement in a community residence (e.g., halfway house, group home, or mental health facility).

The bill also specifies that if an individual regains his or her electoral privileges after forfeiture, he or she must again forfeit them upon returning to confinement in a correctional institution or facility from the following:

1. parole or special parole;
2. release to (a) an educational program or work, (b) a community residence, (c) a zero-tolerance drug supervision program, (d) home confinement for certain motor vehicle and drug offenses, or (e) a community-based nursing home for palliative and end-of-life care; or
3. specified furloughs granted at the commissioner's discretion (e.g., to permit attendance at a relative's funeral or to obtain medical services not otherwise available).

Notice to Secretary of the State and Registrars of Voters (§ 96)

Effective July 1, 2021, the bill makes conforming changes to monthly reports that the (1) DOC commissioner must send to the secretary of the state and (2) secretary must transmit to registrars of voters. Under current law, the commissioner must send the secretary a list by the 15th of each month of all individuals convicted of a felony and committed to DOC custody in the previous calendar month for confinement in a correctional institution, facility, or community residence. The secretary must then send the list to the registrars of voters in towns where (1) these individuals resided at the time of their conviction or (2) she believes they may be electors.

The bill (1) eliminates the requirement that the DOC commissioner's report include a list of these individuals committed for confinement in a community residence and (2) additionally requires that it

include a list of individuals returned to confinement in a correctional institution or facility for violating the terms of their parole, special parole, release, or furlough (see above). It must also include the date and nature of these violations. The bill makes conforming changes to the information the secretary must provide registrars of voters by similarly requiring her to notify registrars in towns where (1) individuals returned to confinement resided at the time of their parole, special parole, release, or furlough violation (as applicable) or (2) she believes they may be electors.

Under existing law, after sending a written notice by certified mail to the individual's last known address, the registrars must remove his or her name from the registry list (CGS § 9-45).

Restoration of Electoral Privileges (§ 98)

Under current law, an individual imprisoned for a felony regains the right to vote and accompanying electoral privileges after paying all fines and completing any required prison and parole time.

Effective July 1, 2021, the bill allows convicted felons to regain their electoral privileges upon release from confinement in a correctional institution or facility. It eliminates current law's requirements that such individuals also, as applicable, (1) be released from a community residence, (2) be discharged from parole, and (3) pay all felony conviction-related fines. The bill specifies that any convicted felon who forfeited his or her electoral privileges and is confined in a community residence must have his or her electoral privileges restored.

Under the bill, the DOC commissioner must, within available appropriations, inform people who are on parole, special parole, or confined in a community residence of their right to become electors and the process for having their privileges restored.

The bill also makes conforming changes to a monthly report that the DOC commissioner must send to the secretary of the state. Under current law, the commissioner must send the secretary a list by the 15th of each month of all individuals convicted of a felony who were released in the previous calendar month from a correctional institution or facility or a community residence and, if applicable, discharged from parole.

The bill eliminates current law's requirement that the list include community residence releases and parole discharges and instead requires that it include individuals who have begun confinement in a community residence. By law, unchanged by the bill, the secretary must send this list to the registrars in the towns where (1) the individuals lived at the time of their conviction or (2) she believes they may be electors.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

§§ 99 & 100 — ELECTION NOTICES

Summary

Requires town clerks to post notices for state and municipal elections on the town website.

Description

The bill requires town clerks to post notices of state and municipal elections on their municipal website, in addition to placing them in a town or general circulation newspaper as required under existing law. Just

as the law requires for newspaper notices, the online notices must appear not more than 15 days, nor less than 5 days, before an election. (For certain elections that occur before November 3, 2021, the bill delays the period during which clerks must provide the notices (see below).) It also requires that the notices include the time and location for each EDR location, as well as each polling place as under existing law.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 99-100 & 127-141 — EXPANDED ABSENTEE VOTING AUTHORIZATION AND UPDATED FORMS FOR ELECTIONS OCCURRING BEFORE NOVEMBER 3, 2021

Summary

Extends to November 2, 2021, certain changes affecting absentee voting eligibility and procedures implemented for the 2020 state election as a result of COVID-19, including by (1) expanding the reasons for which electors may vote by absentee ballot to include the COVID-19 sickness; (2) allowing municipalities to conduct certain absentee ballot pre-counting procedures; and (3) extending, generally by 48 hours, numerous deadlines and timeframes associated with processing absentee ballots and canvassing and reporting the returns

Description

The bill extends to November 2, 2021, certain changes affecting absentee voting eligibility and procedures implemented for the 2020 state election as a result of COVID-19. For a state or municipal election, primary, or referendum occurring before November 3, 2021 (hereafter, “covered election, primary, or referendum”), the bill does the following, among other things:

1. expands the reasons for which electors may vote by absentee ballot to include the COVID-19 sickness;
2. gives the secretary of the state broad authority to change absentee voting forms and materials to conform to the expanded eligibility;
3. authorizes town clerks to mail absentee voting sets using a third-party vendor that the secretary of the state approves and selects;
4. authorizes municipalities to conduct certain absentee ballot pre-counting procedures;
5. authorizes the secretary of the state, subject to certain conditions, to waive requirements under the mandatory supervised absentee voting law;
6. moves up the deadline by which an elector who has returned a completed absentee ballot but later finds he or she is able to vote in person must go to the town clerk’s office to request that the ballot be withdrawn; and
7. extends, generally by 48 hours, numerous deadlines and timeframes associated with processing absentee ballots and canvassing and reporting the returns.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

Expanded Authorization and Updated Forms (§§ 127-129)

Summary

For a covered state or municipal election, primary, or referendum, the bill expands the reasons for which electors may vote by absentee ballot to include the COVID-19 sickness.

Description

The bill requires that absentee ballots be updated for a covered election, primary, or referendum by inserting on the inner envelope's statement, "the sickness of COVID-19" as a reason for which electors may vote absentee. As with other types of absentee voters, those who vote by absentee ballot due to the COVID-19 sickness must sign the ballot under penalties of false statement in absentee balloting.

The bill also gives the secretary of the state broad authority to make changes to absentee voting forms and materials for a covered election, primary, or referendum when, in her opinion, changes are necessary to conform to law. The authorization applies to prescribed absentee voting forms and printed, recorded, or electronic materials.

Delivery of Absentee Ballots to Voters (§ 130)

The bill, with certain exceptions, authorizes town clerks to mail absentee voting sets for a covered election, primary, or referendum using a third-party vendor that the secretary of the state approves and selects. It also requires (1) town clerks to mail the absentee voting sets within 48 hours, rather than within 24 hours, after receiving an application and (2) that any contract between the secretary and a third-party vendor require the vendor to mail each set within 72 hours after receiving the application from the clerk.

The bill's provisions on mailing absentee ballot sets do not apply when a referendum is held with fewer than three weeks' notice since, by law, town clerks may provide absentee ballots for these referenda only to people who apply in person (CGS § 9-369c(a)).

Delivery of Returned Absentee Ballots to Registrars (§ 131)

As discussed below, for a covered election, primary, or referendum, the bill moves up the timeframe for absentee ballot sorting and checking procedures so that registrars of voters may begin certain pre-counting procedures.

By law, town clerks must sort any absentee ballots received by the day before an election, primary, or referendum into voting districts, and they may begin doing so seven days prior. For a covered election, primary, or referendum, the bill authorizes clerks to begin sorting ballots 14 days prior.

For ballots received by 11:00 a.m. on the day before an election, primary, or referendum, the law requires registrars of voters to check the names of applicants returning absentee ballots on the official registry list with "A" or "Absentee." This sorting and checking must be completed by the day before, and the clerk must deliver the sorted and checked ballots to the registrars on the day of the election, primary, or referendum. For a covered election, primary, or referendum, the bill requires the town clerk to deliver these ballots at 6:00 a.m. unless a later time is mutually agreed upon.

The bill allows town clerks to deliver sorted and checked ballots to the registrars before the day of a covered election, primary, or referendum to begin certain pre-counting procedures (see below). Specifically, it allows any ballots received, sorted, and checked by 5:00 p.m. on the fourth day before the election, primary, or referendum to be delivered to the registrars at that time. It similarly allows ballots

received, sorted, and checked by 5:00 p.m. on the third and second days before the election, primary, or referendum to be delivered to the registrars at those times.

In each case, the bill allows the clerk to deliver the ballots at a later time that he or she mutually agrees upon with the registrars. The bill also requires the (1) clerk to include with the ballots an up-to-date copy of the duplicate checklist and (2) clerk and registrars to execute an affidavit of delivery and receipt stating the number of ballots delivered. Existing law applies these requirements to ballots delivered on the day of an election, primary, or referendum.

Requirements for Opting in to Pre-Counting (§ 132)

Under the bill, any municipality opting to conduct pre-counting procedures for a covered election, primary, or referendum, must do so at a central location. The registrars of voters must designate the location in writing to their respective town clerks at least 10 days before the election, primary, or referendum, and the location must be published in the warning for the election, primary, or referendum (see below).

If a municipality opts to use the pre-counting procedures, the bill requires the registrars of voters and town clerk to jointly certify this decision to the secretary of the state, in writing, at least 10 days before the election, primary, or referendum. The certification must include the (1) name, street address, and relevant contact information for the designated central location and (2) name and address of each absentee ballot counter.

The secretary must approve or disapprove the certification within two days after receiving it. The bill also allows her to require the municipality to appoint one or more additional absentee ballot counters.

By law, municipalities must count absentee ballots at a central location unless the registrars of voters agree to count them in each polling place. The bill specifies that any ballots delivered to the registrars on the day of a covered election, primary, or referendum (i.e., those not delivered for pre-counting procedures) may still be counted in the polling places.

Notifying the Public of Covered Elections and Primaries (§§ 99-100 & 133-134)

By law, the town clerk must notify the municipality's electors of a state or municipal election or primary by publishing the warning in a newspaper. The bill generally delays the period during which municipalities must publish these warnings, as shown in the table below.

Table: Notice Requirements

§ 99 Town clerk or assistant town clerk must notify electors of a vacancy election for member of Congress, probate judge, or state legislator by:

CURRENT: From five to 15 days before the election

NEW FOR 2021: From four to seven days before the election publishing the warning in a general circulation newspaper

§ 100 Town clerk or assistant town clerk must notify electors of a municipal election by publishing the warning in a general circulation newspaper:

CURRENT: From five to 15 days before the election

NEW FOR 2021: From four to seven days before the election

§ 133 Town clerk must notify electors of a primary for state or district office by publishing the warning in a general circulation newspaper

CURRENT: 14 days after the close of the convention for major party candidates who receive at least 15% of a roll call vote at the convention

CURRENT: 63 days before the election for major party candidates who petition onto the primary ballot

NEW FOR 2021: From four to seven days before the primary

§ 134 Town clerk must notify electors of a primary for municipal office, or for election as town committee member, by publishing the warning in a general circulation newspaper

CURRENT: 34 days before the primary for municipal offices voted on at a municipal election, or for election as town committee member

CURRENT: 63 days before the primary for municipal offices voted on at a state election

NEW FOR 2021: From four to seven days before the election or primary

Authorized Pre-Counting Procedures (§ 135)

By law, absentee ballot sets consist of an outer envelope, which contains information about the elector (e.g., name and address), and an inner envelope, which contains the elector's marked ballot and a statement signed by the elector under penalty of false statement in absentee balloting. (By law, false statement in absentee balloting is a class D felony.)

The law sets out numerous absentee ballot counting steps, which are generally completed by absentee ballot counters or moderators. It requires that each of these steps be completed beginning on election day.

For municipalities that opt to use pre-counting procedures, the bill authorizes them to complete the following steps, beginning at 5:00 p.m. on the fourth day before the covered election, primary, or referendum:

1. remove the inner envelopes from the outer envelopes;
2. report to the moderator separately the total number of absentee ballots received; and
3. reject ballots for which the inner envelope statement is improperly executed.

Under the bill, once the above steps are completed, the absentee ballots must be counted beginning on the election, primary, or referendum day in accordance with existing law.

Securing the Absentee Ballots Until Election Day. The bill requires that absentee ballots be secured throughout any pre-counting process. Specifically, the ballots must be secured according to (1) instructions from the secretary of the state and (2) existing statutory requirements on securing absentee ballots and related materials. Under the bill, the secretary must issue these instructions at least 10 days before the covered election, primary, or referendum.

Mandatory Supervised Absentee Voting (§ 136)

The bill authorizes the secretary of the state to waive any requirements under the mandatory supervised absentee voting law for a covered election or primary. To waive a requirement, she must do so in recognition of the governor's March 10, 2020, declaration of public health and civil preparedness emergencies.

Before any waiver, the secretary must do the following:

1. consult with the public health commissioner, or the commissioner's designee;
2. give written notice to the town clerk and registrars of voters in each affected municipality; and
3. submit a report to the Government Administration and Elections Committee, advising of the waiver and specifying alternative actions that will be taken to provide any affected electors with absentee voting opportunities.

Deadline for Withdrawing a Submitted Absentee Ballot (§ 137)

By law, electors who submit an absentee ballot must go to the town clerk's office and request to withdraw it if they later find they can vote in person. For a covered election, primary, or referendum, the bill moves up this deadline from 10:00 a.m. on the election, primary, or referendum day to 5:00 p.m. on the fourth day before it, which is the same time that municipalities may begin pre-counting procedures.

Extension of Certain Deadlines & Timeframes (§§ 138-143)

The bill extends, generally by 48 hours, numerous deadlines and timeframes associated with processing absentee ballots and canvassing and reporting returns for a covered election, primary, or referendum (see CGS §§ 9-369c(f) and 9-381a). The changes also generally apply to a referendum held in conjunction with a covered election.

The table below lists, in chronological order, the deadlines and timeframes under current law and the bill.

Table: Changes to the 2021 Election Calendar

§ 140 After submitting the preliminary list of returns, moderator completes the canvass, which includes announcing (1) each candidate's name and absentee vote count and (2) the results for any ballot questions.

CURRENT: 48 hours after the polls close

NEW FOR 2021: 96 hours after the polls close

§ 142 Moderator submits to the secretary of the state the duplicate list of returns (1) by electronic means and (2) in sealed, hard copy

CURRENT: 48 hours after the polls close for the electronic submission

CURRENT: Three days after the election, primary, or referendum for the sealed, hard copy

NEW FOR 2021: 96 hours after the polls close for the electronic submission

NEW FOR 2021: Five days after the election, primary, or referendum for the sealed, hard copy

§ 139 Moderator deposits certificate (from the official checkers) with town clerk indicating the total number of names on the official checklist and the number checked as having voted

CURRENT: 48 hours after the polls close

NEW FOR 2021: 96 hours after the polls close

§ 139 Registrars deposit signed registry list with town clerk

CURRENT: 48 hours after the polls close

NEW FOR 2021: 96 hours after the polls close

§ 143 Registrars provide town clerk with results of votes cast

CURRENT: 48 hours after the polls close

NEW FOR 2021: 96 hours after the polls close

§ 143 For municipalities divided into voting districts, the (1) head moderators, town clerk, and registrars meet to identify any errors in the election or primary night returns and (2) moderators correct any errors and file an amended return with the secretary of the state, town clerk, and registrars

CURRENT: 9:00 a.m. on the third day after the election, primary, or referendum for the meeting

CURRENT: 1:00 p.m. on the third day after the election, primary, or referendum for any amended return

NEW FOR 2021: 9:00 a.m. on the fifth day after the election, primary, or referendum for the meeting

NEW FOR 2021: 1:00 p.m. on the fifth day after the election, primary, or referendum for any amended return

§ 141 If there appears to be a discrepancy, tie vote, or close vote, including a close vote in a referendum, the head moderator calls for a recanvass (CGS §§ 9-311a, -311b, & -370a)

CURRENT: Three days after the election, primary, or referendum

NEW FOR 2021: Five days after the election, primary, or referendum

§ 141 When a recanvass is required due to a discrepancy, tie vote, or close vote, including a close vote in a referendum, the recanvass officials meet to recanvass the returns (CGS §§ 9-311a, -311b, & -370a)

CURRENT: Five business days after the election, primary, or referendum

NEW FOR 2021: Seven business days after the election, primary, or referendum

§ 138 In the event of a recanvass, absentee ballot depository

CURRENT: Five business days after the election,

NEW FOR 2021: Seven business days after the envelopes may be unsealed by court order or State Elections Enforcement Commission subpoena primary, or referendum election, primary, or referendum

§ 141 If a discrepancy, close vote, or tie vote recanvass results in a correction to the original returns, the moderator files one copy of the corrected recanvass return with the secretary of the state and another with the town clerk

CURRENT: 10 days after the election, primary, or referendum

NEW FOR 2021: 12 days after the election, primary, or referendum

§ 101 — ONLINE SYSTEM FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS

Summary

Allows people to apply to the secretary of the state for an absentee ballot using an online system, which the secretary must establish and maintain.

Description

The bill allows individuals to apply to the secretary of the state for an absentee ballot using an online system, which she must establish and maintain for that purpose. To use the system, an applicant's signature must be obtained from a state or federal agency's database, another state's voter registration database, or the e-signature system established by the bill and imported into the online system.

By law, unchanged by the bill, people may also apply for an absentee ballot with the town clerk in the municipality where they are eligible to vote or have applied to register to vote.

The bill also makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2021

§ 102 — DROP BOXES FOR RETURNING ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Summary

Makes permanent the use of drop boxes for returning absentee ballots.

Description

By law, voters may return completed absentee ballots via mail (e.g., the U.S. Postal Service) or in person at the town clerk's office. Under the bill, for a state or municipal election, primary, or referendum, they may also deposit them in secure drop boxes designated for that purpose by their town clerk.

Beginning 29 days before a primary, election, or referendum, and each weekday thereafter until the polls close, the bill requires town clerks to retrieve absentee ballots from the secure drop boxes. The bill eliminates a requirement that applied during the 2020 state election under which a police officer had to escort the town clerk in retrieving absentee ballots from any drop box located outside of a building other than the clerk's office building.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 102 — ABSENTEE BALLOT RETURN BY SIBLINGS AND DESIGNEES

Summary

Expands who is eligible to return absentee ballots on behalf of a voter as an immediate family member or designee.

Description

The bill expands who is eligible to return absentee ballots on behalf of absentee voters. First, the bill authorizes the siblings of absentee voters to return absentee ballots on their behalf, in person to the town clerk, by expanding the definition of “immediate family member” for this purpose. Similarly, it authorizes the siblings of absentee voters who are students to mail absentee ballots on their behalf. Existing law also applies this eligibility to the following immediate family members: a dependent relative living with the voter or a spouse, child, or parent.

The bill also expands who is eligible to be a “designee” for purposes of mailing or returning in person to the town clerk an absentee ballot on behalf of a person with an illness or physical disability. Under the bill, a designee includes a police officer, registrar of voters, or deputy or assistant registrar under any circumstance, not just when another designee is unavailable or does not consent. Under existing law, “designee” also means (1) a person who cares for the applicant because of an illness or physical disability (e.g., physician or nurse) or (2) a designated family member who consents to the designation.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 103 — PERMANENT ABSENTEE BALLOT STATUS

Summary

Makes electors suffering from a long-term illness eligible for permanent absentee ballot status, among other things

Description

The bill makes electors suffering from a long-term illness eligible for permanent absentee ballot status, in addition to those with a permanent physical disability as under existing law. By law, electors with permanent absentee ballot status receive an absentee ballot for each election, primary, and referendum in which they are eligible to vote.

The law requires registrars of voters to send an annual address confirmation notice to determine if those with the status continue to reside at the address on their permanent absentee ballot application. Under current law, registrars must remove electors from permanent status if (1) the notice is returned as undeliverable or (2) the elector fails to return it to the registrars within 30 days after it is sent. The bill instead gives electors up to 60 days to return the notice.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 104 — VOTER REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Summary

Generally limits disclosure of certain voter registration information

Description

The bill limits disclosure of a voter's date of birth maintained under state election law to year and month of birth unless the information is requested and used for a governmental purpose, as determined by the secretary of the state. In that case, the complete birth date must be provided. The bill specifies that "a governmental purpose" must at least include jury administration.

The bill makes a voter's name and address confidential and prohibits their disclosure from the voter registry list if the voter submits a statement signed under penalty of false statement to the secretary of the state indicating that nondisclosure is necessary for the safety of the voter or his or her family. It requires that the statement be signed under penalty of false statement. By law, giving a false statement is a class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, up to a \$2,000 fine, or both (CGS § 53a-157b). Under the bill, primary, election, or referendum officials may view the voter's information on the official registry list at the polling place during any primary, election, or referendum.

The bill conforms the law to current practice by making confidential unique identifiers that generate voter registration records or are added to these records pursuant to the federal Help America Vote Act, as well as by prohibiting their disclosure. Under the bill, "unique identifiers" include motor vehicle license numbers, identity card numbers, and Social Security numbers.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 105 - 106 — CONGRESSIONAL SPECIAL ELECTION

Summary

Changes the deadline by which a challenger must file a candidacy for nomination against the party-endorsed candidate in a special election for (1) judge of probate in a multi-town district or (2) a member of Congress

Description

The law establishes procedures that major political parties must follow when nominating candidates to run in a special election (i.e., an election to fill a vacancy). For vacancies in the offices of judge of probate in a multi-town district and U.S. representative and U.S. senator, it generally allows the party's endorsed candidate to be challenged in a primary unless the vacancy occurs between the 125th day and 63rd day before a regular November state or municipal election (in which case the endorsed candidate becomes the nominee).

Under current law, a person who seeks a primary against an endorsed candidate for these offices must file a candidacy for nomination with the secretary of the state within 14 days after the party's endorsement. The bill moves up this filing deadline to the day after the endorsement and makes conforming changes. As under existing law, a person may file a candidacy for nomination to these offices if he or she (1) receives at least 15% of the convention delegates on any roll-call vote taken on the endorsement or (2) submits a petition with a specified number of signatures from enrolled party members (i.e., 2% of statewide members for U.S. senator; 2% of district members for U.S. representative; and 5% of district members for judge of probate).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 107 — POST-ELECTION AUDITS

Summary

Subjects centrally counted absentee ballots to post-election audits

Description

The law requires registrars of voters to audit at least 5% of the state's voting districts after a federal, state, or municipal regular election or primary. The secretary of the state selects the voting districts to be audited in a random drawing that is open to the public.

The bill subjects centrally counted absentee ballots to post-election audits by designating central-count locations as voting districts for this purpose. Currently, centrally counted absentee ballots are excluded from post-election audits because they are not counted in a voting district.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 108 — SUPERVISED ABSENTEE VOTING

Summary

Authorizes the secretary of the state to suspend supervised absentee voting or mandatory supervised absentee voting in recognition of a public health or civil preparedness emergency

Description

The bill authorizes the secretary of the state to suspend supervised absentee voting that happens upon request, or mandatory supervised absentee voting (see BACKGROUND), so long as she does so in recognition of a public health or civil preparedness emergency declared by the governor. It requires the secretary to submit a report to the Government Administration and Elections (GAE) Committee advising of the suspension and specifying alternative actions that will be taken to provide absentee voting opportunities for the affected electors.

It also eliminates registrars' current discretionary authority to conduct supervised absentee voting sessions in locations where the town clerk receives at least 20 absentee ballot applications from the same street address in town, such as an apartment building.

(The secretary may also waive requirements for mandatory supervised absentee voting for a state or municipal election, primary, or referendum occurring before November 3, 2021 – § 136)

§ 109 — ABSENTEE BALLOTS FOR ELECTORS WITH A VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Summary

Requires the secretary of the state to provide electors who are unable to appear at their polling place because of a visual impairment with an electronic absentee ballot

Description

The bill requires the secretary of the state to electronically provide an absentee ballot to an elector who is unable to appear at his or her polling place because of a visual impairment. The absentee ballot must

be in a format capable of being read by a computer-related device and printed. It also requires that the ballot, if signed by the elector, be counted if it otherwise satisfies all the requirements for returned absentee ballots (e.g., returned no later than the close of the polls).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 110 — ASSISTANCE IN VOTING BOOTHS AT EDR LOCATIONS

Summary

Specifies that electors may receive voting assistance in voting booths at designated EDR locations

Description

By law, electors may receive voting assistance from anyone other than their employer, employer's agent, union representative, or with one exception, candidates whose names appear on the ballot. (A candidate may provide assistance if the elector making the request is an immediate family member.)

Currently, a person assisting an elector may accompany that person into the voting booth. The bill specifies that this authorization applies at both polling places and designated EDR locations.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§§ 111-114 — POLLING PLACE CHALLENGERS

Summary

Conforms the law with current practice by eliminating provisions authorizing registrars of voters to appoint challengers as polling place officials

Description

Current law authorizes each municipality's registrar of voters to appoint up to two challengers per polling place who may challenge the right of anyone attempting to vote if the challenger knows, suspects, or reasonably believes that there is some doubt as to the voter's identity, residence, or disenfranchisement status. The moderator decides any challenge.

The bill conforms the law with current practice by eliminating registrar-appointed challengers as authorized poll workers during a primary or election. Existing law, unchanged by the bill, authorizes any elector to act as a challenger.

§§ 116-121 & 542 — MUNICIPAL ELECTION DATE

Summary

Generally requires each municipality to hold its biennial municipal election on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November of odd-numbered years; extends existing provisions on transitioning and deferring terms of office to, and establishes new provisions for, municipalities that change their election date.

Description

Starting January 1, 2022, the bill requires each municipality to hold its biennial municipal election on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November of odd-numbered years unless its legislative body votes by a

three-fourths majority to hold the election on the first Monday in May of odd-numbered years. Under the bill, a municipality that opts for a May election date using this procedure may subsequently move its election date to November through a majority vote of its legislative body. The bill eliminates provisions in current law that (1) allow municipalities to change the date of their biennial municipal election by vote of their legislative body approved at a referendum or by charter and (2) prohibit municipalities from changing an upcoming election's date within six months before its occurrence.

The bill generally extends, to municipalities that change their election date, existing law's provisions on transitioning and deferring terms of office.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2022

§ 122 — TASK FORCE ON ABSENTEE BALLOT ENVELOPES

Summary

Establishes a task force to study the feasibility of implementing procedures under which absentee ballot applicants return absentee ballots using one envelope instead of two

Description

The bill establishes a 12-member task force to study the feasibility of implementing procedures under which absentee ballot applicants return absentee ballots using one envelope instead of two. The study must examine and identify each section of the general statutes that requires amending to implement these procedures.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 123 — WORKING GROUP ON RISK-LIMITING AUDITS

Summary

Establishes a working group to examine risk-limiting audits and oversee a related pilot program, within available appropriations, in five to 10 municipalities for the 2021 municipal elections

Description

The bill establishes a 12-member working group on risk-limiting audits. The group's purpose is to (1) consider risk-limiting audits for determining election results' accuracy and (2) oversee a pilot program, within available appropriations, in five to 10 municipalities on one or more risk-limiting audit methods for the 2021 municipal elections.

As part of its work, the working group must at least examine the following:

1. the feasibility of implementing risk-limiting audits;
2. different methods used in these audits and the practical considerations for implementing each method within Connecticut's existing statutory framework; and
3. procedures, potential equipment, and changes to the statutory framework necessary to implement one or more of these methods.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 124 — MINOR PARTY RULES

Summary

Increases the time period that minor party rules must be on file with the secretary of the state before the party's candidates may appear on the ballot

Description

By law, minor parties must nominate candidates and certify the list of candidates no later than 62 days before the election (CGS § 9-452). Under current law, a copy of the party rules must be on file with the secretary of the state for at least 60 days before the nomination in order for a nominated candidate's name to appear on the official ballot. The bill extends this time period to at least 180 days before the nomination. "Party rules" includes any amendments to them.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 126 — TOWN COMMITTEE PRIMARIES

Summary

Establishes circumstances under which town committee members who are chosen in a direct primary in certain municipalities are deemed elected without a primary

Description

The bill establishes circumstances under which town committee members who are chosen in a direct primary in certain municipalities are deemed elected to the committee without a primary. Under the bill, in municipalities with a population of 100,000 or more as estimated by the most recent version of the State Register and Manual, no direct primary is held if, by 4:00 p.m. on the 49th day before the primary (i.e., 15 days before the deadline for filing candidacy petitions), the number of people who have requested petition forms and filed a statement consenting to be a candidate (1) does not exceed the number of town committee members being elected but (2) is at least 25% of that number.

The bill instead exempts these candidates from the law's primary petition deadline and signature requirements and deems them elected to the town committee without a direct primary. (Generally, the law requires that these petitions be (1) filed with the registrar of voters by 4:00 p.m. on the 34th day before the primary; (2) signed by at least 5% of the enrolled party members in the town, or a lesser number if provided in the party rules; and (3) certified by the registrar of voters (CGS §§ 9-405 to -406 and -412).)

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 144 — ABSENTEE BALLOT SIGNATURE VERIFICATION PILOT PROGRAM

Summary

Requires the secretary of the state to establish a pilot program to manually or electronically verify signatures on the inner envelopes for returned absentee ballots at the 2022 state election

Description

The bill requires the secretary of the state to establish a pilot program to manually or electronically verify signatures on the inner envelopes for returned absentee ballots at the 2022 state election. She must randomly select five municipalities to participate in the program, based on their population according to the most recent version of the state register and manual, as follows:

1. one municipality with a population of less than 10,000;
2. one municipality with a population between 10,000 and 24,999;
3. one municipality with a population between 25,000 and 49,999;
4. one municipality with a population between 50,000 and 99,999; and
5. one municipality with a population of 100,000 or greater.

By January 1, 2023, the secretary must submit a report on the program's findings and recommendations for legislation to the Government Administration and Elections Committee.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

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