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SENATE BILL NO. 315

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections
on February 8, 2000)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Reynolds)

*A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 24.2-700 and 24.2-701 of the Code of Virginia, relating to absentee voting and absentee ballot applications.***Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That §§ 24.2-700 and 24.2-701 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 24.2-700. Persons entitled to vote by absentee ballot.

The following registered voters may vote by absentee ballot in accordance with the provisions of this chapter in any election in which they are qualified to vote:

1. Any person who, in the regular and orderly course of his business, profession, or occupation or while on personal business or vacation, will be absent from the county or city in which he is entitled to vote;

2. Any person who is (i) a member of a uniformed service of the United States, as defined in 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff-6(7), on active duty, or (ii) a member of the merchant marine of the United States, or (iii) regularly employed in a business, profession or occupation outside the continental limits of the United States, or (iv) the spouse or dependent residing with any person listed in (i), (ii), or (iii), and who will be absent on the day of the election from the county or city in which he is entitled to vote;

3. Any student attending a school or institution of learning, or his spouse, who will be absent on the day of election from the county or city in which he is entitled to vote;

4. Any person who is unable to go in person to the polls on the day of election because of a physical disability or physical illness;

5. Any person who is confined while awaiting trial or for having been convicted of a misdemeanor, provided that the trial or release date is scheduled on or after the third day preceding the election. Any person who is awaiting trial and is a resident of the county or city where he is confined shall, on his request, be taken to the polls to vote on election day if his trial date is postponed and he did not have an opportunity to vote absentee;

6. Any person who is a member of an electoral board, registrar, officer of election, or custodian of voting equipment;

7. Any duly registered person who is unable to go in person to the polls on the day of the election because he is primarily and personally responsible for the care of an ill or disabled family member who is confined at home; or

8. Any duly registered person who is unable to go in person to the polls on the day of the election because of an obligation occasioned by his religion; or

9. Any person who, in the regular and orderly course of his business, profession, or occupation, will be at his place of work for eleven or more hours of the thirteen hours that the polls are open pursuant to § 24.2-603.

§ 24.2-701. Application for absentee ballot.

A. The State Board shall furnish each general registrar with a sufficient number of applications for official absentee ballots. The registrars shall furnish applications to persons requesting them.

Beginning with the general election in November 1999, the State Board shall implement a system which enables eligible persons to request and receive an absentee ballot application electronically through the global information system known as the Internet. Electronic absentee ballot applications shall be in a form approved by the State Board.

Except as provided in § 24.2-703, a separate application shall be completed for each election in which the applicant offers to vote. No application shall be accepted more than ten months prior to the election for which the ballot is requested. Any application received before the ballots are printed shall be held and processed as soon as the printed ballots for the election are available.

For the purposes of this chapter, the general registrar's office shall be open a minimum of eight hours between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on the first and second Saturday immediately preceding all general or primary elections and on the Saturday immediately preceding any special election.

Unless physically disabled, all applications for absentee ballots shall be signed by the applicant who shall state, subject to felony penalties for making false statements pursuant to § 24.2-1016, that to the best of his knowledge and belief the facts contained in the application are true and correct and that he has not and will not vote in the election at any other place in Virginia or in any other state. If the applicant is unable to sign the application, the witness will note this fact on the applicant signature line.

B. Applications for absentee ballots shall be completed in the following manner:

1. An application completed in person shall be made not less than three days prior to the election in which the applicant offers to vote and completed only in the office of the general registrar. The applicant shall sign the application in the presence of a registrar or the secretary of the electoral board.

2. Any other application may be made by mail, electronic or telephonic transmission to a facsimile device if one is available to the office of the general registrar or the office of the State Board if a device is not available locally, or other means. The application shall be on a form furnished by the registrar or, if made under subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700, may be on a Federal Post Card Application prescribed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff (b) (2). The application shall be made to the appropriate registrar not less than five days prior to the election in which the applicant offers to vote.

C. Applications for absentee ballots shall contain the following information:

1. The reason the applicant will be absent or cannot vote at his polling place on the day of the election;

2. A statement that he is registered in the county or city in which he offers to vote and his residence address in such county or city. Any person who makes application under subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700 who is not a registered voter and who is entitled to register by absentee application pursuant to § 24.2-419, may file the applications to register and for a ballot simultaneously;

3. The complete address to which the ballot is to be sent directly to the applicant, provided that the application is not made in person at a time when the printed ballots for the election are available. The address given shall be either the address of the applicant on file in the registration records or the address at which he will be located while absent from his county or city. No ballot shall be sent to, or in care of, any other person; and

4. In the case of a person, or the spouse or dependent of a person, who is on active service as a member of the armed forces of the United States or a member of the merchant marine of the United States, the branch of service to which he or the spouse belongs, and his or the spouse's rank, grade, or rate, and service identification number; or

5. In the case of a person, or the spouse or dependent accompanying such person, who is regularly employed outside the continental limits of the United States, the name and address of his employer; or

6. In the case of a student, or the spouse of a student, who is attending a school or institution of learning, the name and address of the school or institution of learning; or

7. In the case of a person who is unable to go in person to the polls on the day of the election because of a physical disability or physical illness, the nature of the illness or disability; or

8. In the case of a person who is confined awaiting trial or for having been convicted of a misdemeanor, the name and address of the institution of confinement; or

9. In the case of a person who will be absent on election day for business reasons, the name of his employer or business; or

10. In the case of a person who will be absent on election day for personal business or vacation reasons, the name of the county or city in Virginia or the state or country to which he is traveling; or

11. In the case of a person who is unable to go to the polls on the day of election because he is primarily and personally responsible for the care of an ill or disabled family member who is confined at home, the name of the family member and the nature of his illness or disability; or

12. In the case of a person who is unable to go to the polls on the day of election because of an obligation occasioned by his religion, his religion and the nature of the obligation; or

13. *In the case of a person who, in the regular and orderly course of his business, profession, or occupation, will be at his place of work for eleven or more hours of the thirteen hours that the polls are open pursuant to § 24.2-603, the name of his business or employer, address of his place of work, and hours he will be at the workplace on election day.*