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SENATE BILL NO. 418

Offered January 21, 2000

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 24.2-506, 24.2-521, 24.2-543 and 24.2-684.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to petition requirements for candidates and in presidential and referenda elections.

Patrons—Miller, K.G., Colgan, Forbes, Lambert, Newman, Rerras, Schrock, Watkins and Whipple;
Delegates: Albo, Bloxom, Bryant, Cantor, Day, Devolites, Drake, Dudley, Griffith, Howell, Johnson,
Jones, S.C., Landes, Louderback, O'Brien, Plum, Pollard, Putney, Rust, Sherwood, Van Lanningham
and Wardrup

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 24.2-506, 24.2-521, 24.2-543 and 24.2-684.1 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 24.2-506. Petition of qualified voters required; number of signatures required; certain towns excepted.

The name of any candidate for any office, other than a party nominee, shall not be printed upon any official ballots provided for the election unless he shall file along with his declaration of candidacy a petition therefor, on a form prescribed by the State Board, signed by the number of qualified voters specified below after January 1 of the year in which the election is held and listing the residence address of each such voter. Each signature on the petition shall have been witnessed by a person who is himself a qualified voter, *or qualified to register to vote*, for the office for which he is circulating the petition and, in the case of a statewide office, is a resident of the same or a contiguous congressional district as the voter whose signature is witnessed, and whose affidavit to that effect appears on each page of the petition.

Each voter signing the petition shall provide on the petition his social security number, if any; however, noncompliance with this requirement shall not be cause to invalidate the voter's signature on the petition.

The minimum number of signatures of qualified voters required for candidate petitions shall be as follows:

1. For a candidate for the United States Senate, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or Attorney General, 10,000 signatures, including the signatures of at least 400 qualified voters from each congressional district in the Commonwealth;

2. For a candidate for the United States House of Representatives, 1,000 signatures;

3. For a candidate for the Senate of Virginia, 250 signatures;

4. For a candidate for the House of Delegates or for a constitutional office, 125 signatures;

5. For a candidate for membership on the governing body or elected school board of any county or city, 125 signatures; or if from an election district not at large containing 1,000 or fewer registered voters, 50 signatures;

6. For a candidate for membership on the governing body or elected school board of any town which has more than 1,500 registered voters, 125 signatures; or if from a ward or other district not at large, 25 signatures;

7. For membership on the governing body or elected school board of any town which has 1,500 or fewer registered voters, no petition shall be required; and

8. For any other candidate, 50 signatures.

§ 24.2-521. Petition required to accompany declaration; number of signatures required.

A candidate for nomination by primary for any office shall be required to file with his declaration of candidacy a petition for his name to be printed on the official primary ballot, on a form prescribed by the State Board, signed by the number of qualified voters specified below after January 1 of the year in which the election is held or before or after said date in the case of a March primary, and listing the residence address of each such voter. Each signature on the petition shall have been witnessed by a person who is himself a qualified voter ~~eligible~~, *or qualified to register to vote*, for the office for which he is circulating the petition and, in the case of a statewide office, is a resident of the same or a contiguous congressional district as the voter whose signature is witnessed, and whose affidavit to that effect appears on each page of the petition.

Each voter signing the petition shall provide on the petition his social security number, if any; however, noncompliance with this requirement shall not be cause to invalidate the voter's signature on the petition.

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SB418

60 The minimum number of signatures of qualified voters required for primary candidate petitions shall
61 be as follows:

62 1. For a candidate for the United States Senate, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or Attorney General,
63 10,000 signatures, including the signatures of at least 400 qualified voters from each congressional
64 district in the Commonwealth;

65 2. For a candidate for the United States House of Representatives, 1,000 signatures;

66 3. For a candidate for the Senate of Virginia, 250 signatures;

67 4. For a candidate for the House of Delegates or for a constitutional office, 125 signatures;

68 5. For a candidate for membership on the governing body of any county or city, 125 signatures; or if
69 from an election district not at large containing 1,000 or fewer registered voters, 50 signatures;

70 6. For a candidate for membership on the governing body of any town which has more than 1,500
71 registered voters, 125 signatures; or if from a ward or other district not at large, 25 signatures;

72 7. For membership on the governing body of any town which has 1,500 or fewer registered voters,
73 no petition shall be required; and

74 8. For any other candidate, 50 signatures.

75 § 24.2-543. How other groups may submit names of electors.

76 A group of qualified voters, not constituting a political party as defined in § 24.2-101, may have the
77 names of electors selected by them, including one elector residing in each congressional district and two
78 from the Commonwealth at large, printed upon the official ballot to be used in the election of electors
79 for President and Vice-President by filing a petition pursuant to this section. The petition shall be filed
80 with the State Board by noon of the seventy-fourth day before the presidential election. The petition
81 shall be signed by at least 10,000 qualified voters and include signatures of at least 400 qualified voters
82 from each congressional district. The petition shall be signed by petitioners on and after January 1 of the
83 year of the presidential election only and contain the residence address of each petitioner. The signature
84 of each petitioner shall be witnessed by a *person who is a qualified voter, or qualified to register to*
85 *vote, and* who is a resident of the same or a contiguous congressional district as the voter whose
86 signature is witnessed, and whose affidavit to that effect appears on each page of the petition. The
87 petition shall state the names of the electors selected by the petitioners, the party name under which they
88 desire the named electors to be listed on the ballot, and the names of the candidates for President and
89 Vice-President for whom the electors are expected to vote in the Electoral College. In order to utilize a
90 selected party name on the ballot, the petitioners shall have had a state central committee composed of
91 registered voters from each congressional district of the Commonwealth, a party plan and bylaws, and a
92 duly designated chairman and secretary in existence and holding office for at least six months prior to
93 filing the petition. The State Board may require proof that the petitioners meet these requirements before
94 permitting use of a party name on the ballot. The party name shall not be identical with or substantially
95 similar to the name of any political party qualifying under § 24.2-101 and then in existence.

96 In the event of the death or withdrawal of a candidate for President or Vice-President qualified to
97 appear on the ballot by party name, that party may substitute the name of a different candidate before
98 the State Board certifies to the county and city electoral boards the form of the official ballots.

99 In the event that a group of qualified voters meets the requirements set forth in this section except
100 that they cannot utilize a party name, the electors selected and the candidates for President and
101 Vice-President shall be identified and designated as "Independent" on the ballot. Substitution of a
102 different candidate for Vice-President may be made by the candidate for President before the State
103 Board certifies to the county and city electoral boards the form of the official ballot.

104 § 24.2-684.1. Requirements for voter petitions to call for referendum elections.

105 In addition to other applicable requirements of law, the following requirements shall apply whenever
106 a referendum election is initiated by voter petitions. The requirements of this section shall be construed
107 to override any requirement of general or special law in conflict with this section, except requirements
108 set out in charter provisions to govern the exercise of recall, initiative, or referendum powers in a
109 county, city, or town.

110 The requirements of this section shall apply to petitions calling for any referendum which is ordered
111 to be held on or after January 1, 1994.

112 1. Prior to circulating any petition for signature, an individual shall file a copy of the petition with
113 the clerk of the circuit court for the county or city in which the referendum will be held. The individual
114 shall be a qualified voter of the county or city and shall file, with the petition copy, a statement giving
115 his name; residence address and, if different, his mailing address; and the name of the organization, if
116 any, which he represents in circulating the petition. The copy of the petition shall be filed on or after
117 the effective date of the law which authorizes the referendum for which the petition will be circulated.
118 The clerk shall certify, within ten days of such filing, that he has received and accepted the petition
119 copy and statement.

120 2. If the referendum will be held only in a town, the copy and statement shall be filed with the clerk
121 of the circuit court for the county in which the town, or larger portion of the town, is located, and the

individual shall be a qualified voter of the town. If the referendum will be held only in part of a county, city, or town, the copy and statement shall be filed with the clerk of the appropriate circuit court, and the individual shall be a qualified voter of the part of the county, city, or town in which the referendum will be held. If the referendum will be held in more than one county, city, or town, the copy and statement shall be filed with the clerk of the circuit court of any one of the localities in which the referendum will be held, and the individual shall be a qualified voter of that locality.

3. Each qualified voter signing a petition shall date his signature.

4. Each such voter shall provide on the petition his social security number, if any; however, noncompliance with this requirement shall not be cause to invalidate the voter's signature on the petition.

5. Each signature on the petition shall be witnessed by a person who is qualified to vote, *or qualified to register to vote*, in the referendum for which he is circulating the petition and whose affidavit to that effect appears on each page of the petition.

6. The petition shall be circulated, completed, and filed with the appropriate court or authority within nine months of the date of the certification by the clerk of the circuit court pursuant to subdivision 1.

7. Each qualified voter signing the petition shall have been validly registered in the jurisdiction for which the petition is circulated at the time of signing the petition and at the time of validating the petition signatures.

8. The number of voters registered on January 1 of the year of the certification by the clerk of the circuit court pursuant to subdivision 1 shall be the basis for determining the number of signatures required on the petition in all cases in which the law authorizing the referendum provides that the number of signatures required for the petition is a percentage of the number of registered voters.

9. If the court or authority finds that the filed petitions are valid and sufficient under law, it shall proceed, as provided by law, to order or call for the referendum election. If the court or authority finds that the filed petitions are invalid for any cause, the petitions and the signatures on them shall be invalid for all purposes. The invalidity of one or more signatures on a petition page shall not be cause to invalidate the entire petition page. If the circulators of the petitions fail to file within the nine-month period provided in subdivision 6, the petitions and the signatures on them shall be invalid for all purposes.