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SENATE BILL NO. 647

Offered January 24, 2000

A *BILL* to amend and reenact § 24.2-707 of the Code of Virginia, relating to absentee voting procedures.

Patron—Whipple

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 24.2-707 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 24.2-707. How ballots marked and returned by mail; cast in person; cast on voting equipment.

On receipt of a mailed absentee ballot, the voter shall, in the presence of a witness, (i) open the sealed envelope marked "ballot within" and (ii) mark and refold the ballot, as provided in §§ 24.2-644 and 24.2-646 without assistance and without making known how he marked the ballot, except as provided by § 24.2-704.

After the voter has marked his absentee ballot, he shall (i) enclose the ballot in the envelope provided for that purpose, (ii) seal the envelope, (iii) fill in and sign the statement printed on the back of the envelope in the presence of a witness, who shall sign the same envelope, (iv) enclose the ballot envelope and any required assistance form within the envelope directed to the electoral board, and (v) seal that envelope and mail it to the office of the electoral board or deliver it personally to the electoral board or the general registrar.

An applicant who makes his application to vote in person at a time when the printed ballots for the election are available shall follow the same procedure set forth above except that he shall complete the procedure in person in the office of the general registrar or secretary of the electoral board, or at another location or locations in the county or city approved by the electoral board, before a registrar, the secretary, or, if a ballot is cast at that time, before the officers of election appointed by the electoral board. Any such location shall be in a public building owned or leased by *the Commonwealth, an agency of the Commonwealth*, the city, the county, or a town within the county, with adequate facilities for the protection of all records concerning the absentee voters, the absentee ballots, both voted and unvoted, and any voting equipment in use at the location. Such location shall be deemed the equivalent of the office of the general registrar or secretary of the electoral board for the purpose of completing the application for an absentee ballot in person pursuant to §§ 24.2-701 and 24.2-706.

Failure to follow the procedures set forth above shall render the applicant's ballot void.

The electoral board of any county or city using a central absentee voting precinct may provide for the casting of absentee ballots on voting equipment prior to election day by applicants who are voting in person. The State Board shall prescribe procedures for the use of voting equipment. The procedures shall provide for the casting of absentee ballots prior to election day by in-person applicants on voting equipment which has been certified, and is currently approved, by the State Board. The procedures shall be applicable and uniformly applied by the State Board to all jurisdictions using comparable voting equipment. At least two officers of election, one representing each political party, shall be present during all hours that absentee voting is available at any location at which absentee ballots are cast prior to election day.

The requirement that officers of election shall be present if ballots are cast on voting equipment prior to election day shall not be applicable when the voting equipment is located in the office of the general registrar or secretary of the electoral board and the general registrar, an assistant registrar, or the secretary of the electoral board is present.

INTRODUCED

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