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SENATE BILL NO. 613

Offered January 19, 2012

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 24.2-506, 24.2-521, and 24.2-543 of the Code of Virginia, relating to candidate petitions in primaries and general elections.

Patrons—Edwards and Deeds

Unanimous consent to introduce

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 24.2-506, 24.2-521, and 24.2-543 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 age 18 or older and whose affidavit to that effect appears on each page of the petition.

Each voter signing the petition may provide on the petition the last four digits of 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;

8. For a candidate for director of a soil and water conservation district created pursuant to Article 3 (§ 10.1-506 et seq.) of Chapter 5 of Title 10.1, 25 signatures; and

9. 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, or qualified to register to vote, for the office for which he is circulating the petition age 18 or older and whose affidavit to that effect appears on each page of the petition.

Each voter signing the petition may provide on the petition the last four digits of 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 primary candidate petitions shall be as follows:

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- 59 1. For a candidate for the United States Senate, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or Attorney General,
60 10,000 signatures, including the signatures of at least 400 qualified voters from each congressional
61 district in the Commonwealth;
62 2. For a candidate for the United States House of Representatives, 1,000 signatures;
63 3. For a candidate for the Senate of Virginia, 250 signatures;
64 4. For a candidate for the House of Delegates or for a constitutional office, 125 signatures;
65 5. For a candidate for membership on the governing body of any county or city, 125 signatures; or if
66 from an election district not at large containing 1,000 or fewer registered voters, 50 signatures;
67 6. For a candidate for membership on the governing body of any town which has more than 1,500
68 registered voters, 125 signatures; or if from a ward or other district not at large, 25 signatures;
69 7. For membership on the governing body of any town which has 1,500 or fewer registered voters,
70 no petition shall be required; and
71 8. For any other candidate, 50 signatures.

72 § 24.2-543. How other groups may submit names of electors; oaths of electors.

73 A group of qualified voters, not constituting a political party as defined in § 24.2-101, may have the
74 names of electors selected by them, including one elector residing in each congressional district and two
75 from the Commonwealth at large, printed upon the official ballot to be used in the election of electors
76 for President and Vice President by filing a petition pursuant to this section. The petition shall be filed
77 with the State Board by noon of the seventy-fourth day before the presidential election. The petition
78 shall be signed by at least 10,000 qualified voters and include signatures of at least 400 qualified voters
79 from each congressional district. The petition shall be signed by petitioners on and after January 1 of the
80 year of the presidential election only and contain the residence address of each petitioner. The signature
81 of each petitioner shall be witnessed by a person who is a ~~qualified voter, or qualified to register to~~
82 ~~vote, age 18 or older~~ and whose affidavit to that effect appears on each page of the petition. The
83 petition shall state the names of the electors selected by the petitioners, the party name under which they
84 desire the named electors to be listed on the ballot, and the names of the candidates for President and
85 Vice President for whom the electors are required to vote in the Electoral College. The persons filing
86 the petition shall file with it a copy of a subscribed and notarized oath by each elector stating that he
87 will, if elected, cast his ballot for the candidates for President and Vice President named in the petition,
88 or as the party may direct in the event of death, withdrawal or disqualification of the party nominee. In
89 order to utilize a selected party name on the ballot, the petitioners shall have had a state central
90 committee composed of registered voters from each congressional district of the Commonwealth, a party
91 plan and bylaws, and a duly designated chairman and secretary in existence and holding office for at
92 least six months prior to filing the petition. The State Board may require proof that the petitioners meet
93 these requirements before permitting use of a party name on the ballot. The party name shall not be
94 identical with or substantially similar to the name of any political party qualifying under § 24.2-101 and
95 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 Vice
101 President shall be identified and designated as "Independent" on the ballot. Substitution of a different
102 candidate for Vice President may be made by the candidate for President before the State Board certifies
103 to the county and city electoral boards the form of the official ballot.