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HOUSE BILL NO. 980

Offered January 8, 2014

Prefiled January 8, 2014

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 24.2-701, as it is currently effective and as it shall become effective, and 24.2-706 of the Code of Virginia, relating to absentee voting; publication of street address for the return of absentee ballots.

Patron—Surovell

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 24.2-701, as it is currently effective and as it shall become effective, and 24.2-706 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 24.2-701. (Effective until July 1, 2014) 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. *The applications shall contain instructions for returning the application, including a street address of the office of the general registrar that is capable of receiving mail by commercial delivery service.*

The State Board shall implement a system that enables eligible persons to request and receive an absentee ballot application electronically through the Internet. Electronic absentee ballot applications shall be in a form approved by the State Board *and shall contain instructions for returning the application, including a street address of the office of the general registrar that is capable of receiving mail by commercial delivery service.*

Except as provided in § 24.2-703, a separate application shall be completed for each election in which the applicant offers to vote. An application for an absentee ballot may be accepted the later of (i) 12 months before an election or (ii) the day following any election held in the twelfth month prior to the election in which the applicant is applying to vote.

An application that is completed in person at the same time that the applicant registers to vote shall be held and processed no sooner than the fifth day after the date that the applicant registered to vote; however, this requirement shall not be applicable to any person who is qualified to vote absentee under subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700.

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 elections, except May general elections, and on the Saturday immediately preceding any primary election, May general election, or special election.

Unless the applicant is 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, a person assisting the applicant will note this fact on the applicant signature line and provide his signature, name, and address.

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 a member of the electoral board. The applicant shall provide one of the forms of identification specified in subsection B of § 24.2-643. Any applicant who does not show one of the forms of identification specified in subsection B of § 24.2-643 shall be offered a provisional ballot under the provisions of § 24.2-653. The State Board of Elections shall provide instructions to the electoral boards for the handling and counting of such provisional ballots pursuant to subsection B of § 24.2-653 and this section.

For federal elections held after January 1, 2004, this paragraph shall apply in the case of any voter who is required by subparagraph (b) of 42 U.S.C.S. § 15483 of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to show identification the first time that voter votes in a federal election in the state. After completing an application for an absentee ballot in person, such voter shall present (i) a current and valid photo identification or (ii) a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter. Such individual who desires

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59 to vote in person but who does not show one of the forms of identification specified in this subdivision
60 shall be offered a provisional ballot under the provisions of § 24.2-653. Neither the identification
61 requirements of subsection B of § 24.2-643, nor the identification requirements of subsection A of
62 § 24.2-653, shall apply to such voter at that election. The State Board of Elections shall provide
63 instructions to the electoral boards for the handling and counting of such provisional ballots pursuant to
64 subsection B of § 24.2-653 and this section.

65 2. Any other application may be made by mail, electronic or telephonic transmission to a facsimile
66 device if one is available to the office of the general registrar or the office of the State Board if a
67 device is not available locally, or other means. The application shall be on a form furnished by the
68 registrar or, if made under subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700, may be on a federal postcard application
69 prescribed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(2). The federal postcard application may be accepted the
70 later of (i) 12 months before an election or (ii) the day following any election held in the twelfth month
71 prior to the election in which the applicant is applying to vote. The application shall be made to the
72 appropriate registrar no later than 5:00 p.m. on the seventh day prior to the election in which the
73 applicant offers to vote.

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

75 1. The applicant's printed name, the last four digits of the applicant's social security number, and the
76 reason the applicant will be absent or cannot vote at his polling place on the day of the election;

77 2. A statement that he is registered in the county or city in which he offers to vote and his residence
78 address in such county or city. Any person temporarily residing outside the United States shall provide
79 the last date of residency at his Virginia residence address, if that residence is no longer available to
80 him. Any person who makes application under subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700 who is not a registered voter
81 may file the applications to register and for a ballot simultaneously;

82 3. The complete address to which the ballot is to be sent directly to the applicant, unless the
83 application is made in person at a time when the printed ballots for the election are available and the
84 applicant chooses to vote in person at the time of completing his application. The address given shall be
85 (i) the address of the applicant on file in the registration records; (ii) the address at which he will be
86 located while absent from his county or city; or (iii) the address at which he will be located while
87 temporarily confined due to a disability or illness. No ballot shall be sent to, or in care of, any other
88 person; and

89 4. In the case of a person, or the spouse or dependent of a person, who is on active duty as a
90 member of the uniformed services as defined in § 24.2-452, the branch of service to which he or the
91 spouse belongs; or

92 5. In the case of a student, or the spouse of a student, who is attending a school or institution of
93 learning, the name of the school or institution of learning; or

94 6. In the case of any duly registered person with a disability, as defined in § 24.2-101, who is unable
95 to go in person to the polls on the day of the election because of his disability, illness, or pregnancy,
96 that he is a person with a disability, illness, or pregnancy; or

97 7. In the case of a person who is confined awaiting trial or for having been convicted of a
98 misdemeanor, the name of the institution of confinement; or

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

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

103 10. In the case of a person who is unable to go to the polls on the day of election because he is
104 primarily and personally responsible for the care of an ill or disabled family member who is confined at
105 home, his relationship to the family member; or

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

108 12. In the case of a person who, in the regular and orderly course of his business, profession, or
109 occupation, will be at his place of work and commuting to and from his home to his place of work for
110 11 or more hours of the 13 hours that the polls are open pursuant to § 24.2-603, the name of his
111 business or employer and hours he will be at the workplace and commuting on election day; or

112 13. In the case of a law-enforcement officer, as defined in § 18.2-51.1; firefighter, as defined in
113 § 65.2-102; volunteer firefighter, as defined in § 27-42; search and rescue personnel, as defined in
114 § 18.2-51.1; or emergency medical services personnel, as defined in § 32.1-111.1, that he is a first
115 responder; or

116 14. In the case of a person who has been designated by a political party, independent candidate, or
117 candidate in a primary election to be a representative of the party or candidate inside a polling place on
118 the day of the election pursuant to subsection C of § 24.2-604 and § 24.2-639, the fact that he is so
119 designated.

120 **§ 24.2-701. (Effective July 1, 2014) 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. *The applications shall contain instructions for returning the application, including a street address of the office of the general registrar that is capable of receiving mail by commercial delivery service.*

The State Board shall implement a system that enables eligible persons to request and receive an absentee ballot application electronically through the Internet. Electronic absentee ballot applications shall be in a form approved by the State Board *and shall contain instructions for returning the application, including a street address of the office of the general registrar that is capable of receiving mail by commercial delivery service.*

Except as provided in § 24.2-703, a separate application shall be completed for each election in which the applicant offers to vote. An application for an absentee ballot may be accepted the later of (i) 12 months before an election or (ii) the day following any election held in the twelfth month prior to the election in which the applicant is applying to vote.

An application that is completed in person at the same time that the applicant registers to vote shall be held and processed no sooner than the fifth day after the date that the applicant registered to vote; however, this requirement shall not be applicable to any person who is qualified to vote absentee under subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700.

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 elections, except May general elections, and on the Saturday immediately preceding any primary election, May general election, or special election.

Unless the applicant is 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, a person assisting the applicant will note this fact on the applicant signature line and provide his signature, name, and address.

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 a member of the electoral board. The applicant shall provide one of the forms of identification specified in subsection B of § 24.2-643. Any applicant who does not show one of the forms of identification specified in subsection B of § 24.2-643 shall be offered a provisional ballot under the provisions of § 24.2-653. The State Board of Elections shall provide instructions to the electoral boards for the handling and counting of such provisional ballots pursuant to subsection B of § 24.2-653 and this section.

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 postcard application prescribed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1973ff(b)(2). The federal postcard application may be accepted the later of (i) 12 months before an election or (ii) the day following any election held in the twelfth month prior to the election in which the applicant is applying to vote. The application shall be made to the appropriate registrar no later than 5:00 p.m. on the seventh day prior to the election in which the applicant offers to vote.

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

1. The applicant's printed name, the last four digits of the applicant's social security number, and 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 temporarily residing outside the United States shall provide the last date of residency at his Virginia residence address, if that residence is no longer available to him. Any person who makes application under subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700 who is not a registered voter 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, unless the application is made in person at a time when the printed ballots for the election are available and the applicant chooses to vote in person at the time of completing his application. The address given shall be (i) the address of the applicant on file in the registration records; (ii) the address at which he will be located while absent from his county or city; or (iii) the address at which he will be located while temporarily confined due to a disability or illness. No ballot shall be sent to, or in care of, any other

182 person; and

183 4. In the case of a person, or the spouse or dependent of a person, who is on active duty as a
184 member of the uniformed services as defined in § 24.2-452, the branch of service to which he or the
185 spouse belongs; or

186 5. In the case of a student, or the spouse of a student, who is attending a school or institution of
187 learning, the name of the school or institution of learning; or

188 6. In the case of any duly registered person with a disability, as defined in § 24.2-101, who is unable
189 to go in person to the polls on the day of the election because of his disability, illness, or pregnancy,
190 that he is a person with a disability, illness, or pregnancy; or

191 7. In the case of a person who is confined awaiting trial or for having been convicted of a
192 misdemeanor, the name of the institution of confinement; or

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

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

197 10. In the case of a person who is unable to go to the polls on the day of election because he is
198 primarily and personally responsible for the care of an ill or disabled family member who is confined at
199 home, his relationship to the family member; or

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

202 12. In the case of a person who, in the regular and orderly course of his business, profession, or
203 occupation, will be at his place of work and commuting to and from his home to his place of work for
204 11 or more hours of the 13 hours that the polls are open pursuant to § 24.2-603, the name of his
205 business or employer and hours he will be at the workplace and commuting on election day; or

206 13. In the case of a law-enforcement officer, as defined in § 18.2-51.1; firefighter, as defined in
207 § 65.2-102; volunteer firefighter, as defined in § 27-42; search and rescue personnel, as defined in
208 § 18.2-51.1; or emergency medical services personnel, as defined in § 32.1-111.1, that he is a first
209 responder; or

210 14. In the case of a person who has been designated by a political party, independent candidate, or
211 candidate in a primary election to be a representative of the party or candidate inside a polling place on
212 the day of the election pursuant to subsection C of § 24.2-604 and § 24.2-639, the fact that he is so
213 designated.

214 **§ 24.2-706. Duty of general registrar and electoral board on receipt of application; statement of**
215 **voter.**

216 On receipt of an application for an absentee ballot, the general registrar shall enroll the name and
217 address of each registered applicant on an absentee voter applicant list that shall be maintained in the
218 office of the general registrar with a file of the applications of the listed applicants. The list shall be
219 available for inspection and copying and the applications shall be available for inspection only by any
220 registered voter during regular office hours. Upon request and for a reasonable fee, the State Board of
221 Elections shall provide an electronic copy of the absentee voter applicant list to any political party or
222 candidate. Such list shall be used only for campaign and political purposes. Any list made available for
223 inspection and copying under this section shall contain the post office box address in lieu of the
224 residence street address for any individual who has furnished at the time of registration or subsequently,
225 in addition to his street address, a post office box address pursuant to subsection B of § 24.2-418.

226 No list or application containing an individual's social security number, or any part thereof, or the
227 individual's day and month of birth, shall be made available for inspection or copying by anyone. The
228 State Board of Elections shall prescribe procedures for local electoral boards and general registrars to
229 make the information in the lists and applications available in a manner that does not reveal social
230 security numbers or parts thereof, or an individual's day and month of birth.

231 The completion and timely delivery of an application for an absentee ballot shall be construed to be
232 an offer by the applicant to vote in the election.

233 The general registrar shall note on each application received whether the applicant is or is not a
234 registered voter and notify the secretary of the electoral board. In reviewing the application for an
235 absentee ballot, the general registrar and electoral board shall not reject the application of any individual
236 because of an error or omission on any record or paper relating to the application, if such error or
237 omission is not material in determining whether such individual is qualified to vote absentee.

238 If the application has been properly completed and signed and the applicant is a registered voter of
239 the precinct in which he offers to vote, the electoral board shall, at the time when the printed ballots for
240 the election are available, send by the deadline set out in § 24.2-612, obtaining a certificate of either
241 first-class or expedited mailing or delivery from the United States Postal Service or other commercial
242 delivery provider, or deliver to him in person in the office of the secretary or registrar, the following
243 items and nothing else:

1. An envelope containing the folded ballot, sealed and marked "Ballot within. Do not open except in presence of a witness."

2. An envelope, with printing only on the flap side, for resealing the marked ballot, on which envelope is printed the following:

"Statement of Voter."

"I do hereby state, subject to felony penalties for making false statements pursuant to § 24.2-1016, that my FULL NAME is _____ (last, first, middle); that I am now or have been at some time since last November's general election a legal resident of _____ (STATE YOUR LEGAL RESIDENCE IN VIRGINIA including the house number, street name or rural route address, city, zip code); that I received the enclosed ballot(s) upon application to the registrar of such county or city; that I opened the envelope marked 'ballot within' and marked the ballot(s) in the presence of the witness, without assistance or knowledge on the part of anyone as to the manner in which I marked it (or I am returning the form required to report how I was assisted); that I then sealed the ballot(s) in this envelope; and that I have not voted and will not vote in this election at any other time or place.

Signature of Voter

Date

Signature of witness"

For elections held after January 1, 2004, instead of the envelope containing the above oath, an envelope containing the standard oath prescribed by the presidential designee under § 101(b)(7) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff et seq.) shall be sent to voters who are qualified to vote absentee under that Act.

3. A properly addressed envelope for the return of the ballot to the electoral board by mail or by the applicant in person.

4. Printed instructions for completing the ballot and statement on the envelope and returning the ballot. *The instructions shall include a street address of the office of the electoral board that is capable of receiving mail by commercial delivery service if the printed return envelope has a post office box address.*

For federal elections held after January 1, 2004, for any voter who is required by subparagraph (b) of 42 U.S.C. § 15483 of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to show identification the first time the voter votes in a federal election in the state, the printed instructions shall direct the voter to submit with his ballot (i) a copy of a current and valid photo identification or (ii) a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter. Such individual who desires to vote by mail but who does not submit one of the forms of identification specified in this paragraph may cast such ballot by mail and the ballot shall be counted as a provisional ballot under the provisions of § 24.2-653. The State Board of Elections shall provide instructions to the electoral boards for the handling and counting of such provisional ballots pursuant to subsection B of § 24.2-653 and this section.

5. For any voter entitled to vote absentee under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (42 U.S.C. § 1973ff et seq.), information provided by the State Board specific to the voting rights and responsibilities for such citizens, or information provided by the registrar specific to the status of the voter registration and absentee ballot application of such voter, may be included.

The envelopes and instructions shall be in the form prescribed by the State Board.

If the applicant makes his application to vote in person under § 24.2-701 at a time when the printed ballots for the election are available, the general registrar or the secretary of the electoral board, on the determination of the qualifications of the applicant to vote, shall provide to the applicant the items set forth in subdivisions 1 through 4, and no item shall be removed by the applicant from the office of the general registrar or the secretary of the electoral board. On the request of the applicant, made no later than 5:00 p.m. on the seventh day prior to the election in which the applicant offers to vote, the general registrar or the secretary may send the items set forth in subdivisions 1 through 4 to the applicant by mail, obtaining a certificate of mailing.

If the applicant states as the reason for his absence on election day any of the reasons set forth in subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700, the electoral board, at the time when the printed ballots for the election are available, shall mail by the deadline set forth in § 24.2-612 or deliver in person to the applicant in the office of the secretary or general registrar the items as set forth in subdivisions 1 through 4 and, if necessary, an application for registration. A certificate of mailing shall not be required. The electoral board, at the time when the printed ballots for the election are available, shall send by the deadline set forth in § 24.2-612 the blank ballot, the form for the envelope for returning the marked ballot, and instructions to the voter by electronic transmission if the voter so requests. The voted ballot shall be returned to the electoral board as otherwise required by this chapter.

When the statement prescribed in subdivision 2 has been properly completed and signed by the registered voter and witnessed, his ballot shall not be subject to challenge pursuant to § 24.2-651.

305 The circuit courts shall have jurisdiction to issue an injunction to enforce the provisions of this
306 section upon the application of (i) any aggrieved voter, (ii) any candidate in an election district in whole
307 or in part in the court's jurisdiction where a violation of this section has occurred, or is likely to occur,
308 or (iii) the campaign committee or the appropriate district political party chairman of such candidate.
309 Any person who fails to discharge his duty as provided in this section through willful neglect of duty
310 and with malicious intent shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor as provided in subsection A of
311 § 24.2-1001.