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**HOUSE BILL NO. 268**

Offered January 10, 2018

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*A BILL to amend and reenact § 24.2-706 of the Code of Virginia, relating to absentee voting; Intelligent Mail barcode on return envelopes.*

Patrons—Bell, John J. and Carter

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:****1. That § 24.2-706 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 24.2-706. Duty of general registrar on receipt of application; statement of voter.**

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

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

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

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

C. ~~The completion and timely delivery of an application for an absentee ballot shall be construed to be an offer by the applicant to vote in the election.~~ If the application has been properly completed and signed and the applicant is a registered voter of the precinct in which he offers to vote, the general registrar shall, at the time when the printed ballots for the election are available, send by the deadline set out in § 24.2-612, obtaining a certificate or other evidence of either first-class or expedited mailing or delivery from the United States Postal Service or other commercial delivery provider, or deliver to him in person in the office of the registrar, the following 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 \_\_\_\_\_"

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59 *When this statement has been properly completed and signed by the registered voter and witnessed,*  
60 *the ballot shall not be subject to challenge pursuant to § 24.2-651.*

61 ~~For elections held after January 1, 2004, instead of the envelope containing the above oath, an An~~  
62 ~~envelope containing the standard oath prescribed by the presidential designee under § 101(b)(7) of the~~  
63 ~~Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (52 U.S.C. § 20301 et seq.) shall be sent to~~  
64 ~~voters who are qualified to vote absentee under that Act, instead of the oath set out above.~~

65 3. A properly addressed envelope, *designed by the Department and containing a United States Postal*  
66 *Service Intelligent Mail barcode*, for the return of the ballot to the general registrar by mail or by the  
67 applicant in person.

68 4. Printed instructions for completing the ballot and statement on the envelope and returning the  
69 ballot.

70 For federal elections ~~held after January 1, 2004~~, for any voter who is required by subparagraph (b) of  
71 52 U.S.C. § 21083 of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to show identification the first time the voter  
72 votes in a federal election in the state, the printed instructions shall direct the voter to submit with his  
73 ballot (i) a copy of a current and valid photo identification or (ii) a copy of a current utility bill, bank  
74 statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows the name and address  
75 of the voter. Such individual who desires to vote by mail but who does not submit one of the forms of  
76 identification specified in this paragraph may cast such ballot by mail and the ballot shall be counted as  
77 a provisional ballot under the provisions of § 24.2-653. The Department of Elections shall provide  
78 instructions to the electoral boards for the handling and counting of such provisional ballots pursuant to  
79 subsection B of § 24.2-653 and this section.

80 5. For any voter entitled to vote absentee under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee  
81 Voting Act (52 U.S.C. § 20301 et seq.), information provided by the Department of Elections specific to  
82 the voting rights and responsibilities for such citizens, or information provided by the registrar specific  
83 to the status of the voter registration and absentee ballot application of such voter, may be included.

84 The envelopes and instructions shall be in the form prescribed by the Department of Elections.

85 D. If the applicant makes his application to vote in person under § 24.2-701 at a time when the  
86 printed ballots for the election are available, the general registrar, on the determination of the  
87 qualifications of the applicant to vote, shall provide to the applicant the items set forth in subdivisions C  
88 1 through 4, and no item shall be removed by the applicant from the office of the general registrar.

89 On the request of the applicant, made no later than 5:00 p.m. on the seventh day prior to the election  
90 in which the applicant offers to vote, the general registrar may send the items set forth in subdivisions 1  
91 through 4 to the applicant by mail, obtaining a certificate or other evidence of mailing.

92 E. If the applicant states as the reason for his absence on election day any of the reasons set forth in  
93 subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700, the general registrar, at the time when the printed ballots for the election  
94 are available, shall mail by the deadline set forth in § 24.2-612 or deliver in person to the applicant in  
95 the office of the general registrar the items as set forth in subdivisions 1 through 4 and, if necessary, an  
96 application for registration. A certificate or other evidence of mailing shall not be required. If the  
97 applicant requests that such items be sent by electronic transmission, the general registrar, at the time  
98 when the printed ballots for the election are available but not later than the deadline set forth in  
99 § 24.2-612, shall send by electronic transmission the blank ballot, the form for the envelope for  
100 returning the marked ballot, and instructions to the voter. Such materials shall be sent using the official  
101 email address or fax number of the office of the general registrar published on the Department of  
102 Elections website. The State Board of Elections may prescribe by regulation the format of the email  
103 address used for transmitting ballots to eligible voters. A general registrar may also use electronic  
104 transmission facilities provided by the Federal Voting Assistance Program. The voted ballot shall be  
105 returned to the general registrar as otherwise required by this chapter.

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

108 F. The circuit courts shall have jurisdiction to issue an injunction to enforce the provisions of this  
109 section upon the application of (i) any aggrieved voter, (ii) any candidate in an election district in whole  
110 or in part in the court's jurisdiction where a violation of this section has occurred, or is likely to occur,  
111 or (iii) the campaign committee or the appropriate district political party chairman of such candidate.  
112 Any person who fails to discharge his duty as provided in this section through willful neglect of duty  
113 and with malicious intent shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor as provided in subsection A of  
114 § 24.2-1001.