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HOUSE BILL NO. 88

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled December 10, 2015

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 24.2-106, 24.2-111, 24.2-114, and 24.2-411 of the Code of Virginia, relating to general registrars and members of electoral boards; annual training; office closures.

Patrons—Cole (By Request) and Sickles

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 24.2-106, 24.2-111, 24.2-114, and 24.2-411 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 24.2-106. Appointment and terms; vacancies; chairman and secretary; certain prohibitions; training.

There shall be in each county and city an electoral board composed of three members who shall be appointed by a majority of the circuit judges of the judicial circuit for the county or city. If a majority of the judges cannot agree, the senior judge shall make the appointment. Any vacancy occurring on a board shall be filled by the same authority for the unexpired term. In the event of the temporary absence, or disability that precludes the performance of duties, of one or more members that prevents attaining a quorum, the senior judge, for good cause, may appoint, on a meeting to meeting basis, a temporary member to the electoral board. The temporary appointee must be eligible for appointment and to the extent practicable maintain representation of political parties under § 24.2-106. The clerk of the circuit court shall send to the State Board a copy of each order making an appointment to an electoral board.

In the appointment of the electoral board, representation shall be given to each of the two political parties having the highest and next highest number of votes in the Commonwealth for Governor at the last preceding gubernatorial election. Two electoral board members shall be of the political party that cast the highest number of votes for Governor at that election. When the Governor was not elected as the candidate of a political party, representation shall be given to each of the political parties having the highest and next highest number of members of the General Assembly at the time of the appointment and two board members shall be of the political party having the highest number of members in the General Assembly. The political party entitled to the appointment shall make and file recommendations with the judges for the appointment not later than January 15 of the year of an appointment to a full term or, in the case of an appointment to fill a vacancy, within 30 days of the date of death or notice of resignation of the member being replaced. Its recommendations shall contain the names of at least three qualified voters of the county or city for each appointment. The judges shall promptly make such appointment (i) after receipt of the political party's recommendation or (ii) after January 15 for a full term or after the 30-day period expires for a vacancy appointment, whichever of the events described in clause (i) or (ii) first occurs.

The circuit judges of the judicial circuit for the county or city shall not appoint to the electoral board (i) any person who is the spouse of an electoral board member or the general registrar for the county or city, (ii) any person, or the spouse of any person, who is the parent, grandparent, sibling, child, or grandchild of an electoral board member or the general registrar of the county or city, or (iii) any person who is ineligible to serve under the provisions of this section.

Electoral board members shall serve three-year terms and be appointed to staggered terms, one term to expire at midnight on the last day of February each year. No three-year term shall be shortened to comply with the political party representation requirements of this section.

The board shall elect one of its members as chairman and another as secretary. The chairman and the secretary shall represent different political parties, unless the representative of the second-ranked political party declines in writing to accept the unfilled office. At any time that the secretary is incapacitated in such a way that makes it impossible for the secretary to carry out the duties of the position, the board may designate one of its other members as acting secretary. Any such designation shall be made in an open meeting and recorded in the minutes of the board.

The secretary of the electoral board shall immediately notify the State Board of any change in the membership or officers of the electoral board and shall keep the Board informed of the name, residence and mailing addresses, and home and business telephone numbers of each electoral board member.

No member of an electoral board shall be eligible to offer for or hold an office to be filled in whole or in part by qualified voters of his jurisdiction. If a member resigns to offer for or hold such office, the

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59 vacancy shall be filled as provided in this section.

60 No member of an electoral board shall be the spouse, grandparent, parent, sibling, child, or
61 grandchild, or the spouse of a grandparent, parent, sibling, child, or grandchild, of a candidate for or
62 holder of an elective office filled in whole or in part by any voters within the jurisdiction of the
63 electoral board.

64 No member of an electoral board shall serve as the chairman of a state, local or district level
65 political party committee or as a paid worker in the campaign of a candidate for nomination or election
66 to an office filled by election in whole or in part by the qualified voters of the jurisdiction of the
67 electoral board.

68 ~~At least one~~ Each member of the electoral board shall attend an annual training program provided by
69 the State Board during the first year of his appointment and the first year of any subsequent
70 reappointment.

71 **§ 24.2-111. Compensation and expenses of general registrars.**

72 The General Assembly shall establish a compensation plan in the general appropriation act for the
73 general registrars. The governing body for the county or city of each general registrar shall pay
74 compensation in accordance with the plan and be reimbursed annually as authorized in the act. The
75 governing body shall be required to provide benefits to the general and assistant registrars and staff as
76 provided to other employees of the locality, and shall be authorized to supplement the salary of the
77 general registrar to the extent provided in the act.

78 Each locality shall pay the reasonable expenses of the general registrar, including reimbursement for
79 mileage at the rate payable to members of the General Assembly. In case of a dispute, the State Board
80 shall approve or disapprove the reimbursement. Reasonable expenses include, but are not limited to,
81 costs for: (i) an adequately trained registrar's staff, including training in the use of computers and other
82 technology to the extent provided to other local employees with similar job responsibilities, and
83 reasonable costs for the general registrar ~~or at least one member of the registrar's staff~~ to attend the
84 annual training offered by the State Board; (ii) adequate training for officers of election; (iii) conducting
85 elections as required by this title; and (iv) voter education.

86 **§ 24.2-114. Duties and powers of general registrar.**

87 In addition to the other duties required by this title, the general registrar, and the assistant registrars
88 acting under his supervision, shall:

89 1. Maintain the office of the general registrar and establish and maintain additional public places for
90 voter registration in accordance with the provisions of § 24.2-412.

91 2. Participate in programs to educate the general public concerning registration and encourage
92 registration by the general public. No registrar shall actively solicit, in a selective manner, any
93 application for registration or for a ballot or offer anything of value for any such application.

94 3. Perform his duties within the county or city he was appointed to serve, except that a registrar may
95 (i) go into a county or city in the Commonwealth contiguous to his county or city to register voters of
96 his county or city when conducting registration jointly with the registrar of the contiguous county or city
97 or (ii) notwithstanding any other provision of law, participate in multijurisdictional staffing for voter
98 registration offices, approved by the State Board, that are located at facilities of the Department of
99 Motor Vehicles.

100 4. Provide the appropriate forms for applications to register and to obtain the information necessary
101 to complete the applications pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of Virginia and general law.

102 5. Indicate on the registration records for each accepted mail voter registration application form
103 returned by mail pursuant to Article 3.1 (§ 24.2-416.1 et seq.) of Chapter 4 that the registrant has
104 registered by mail. The general registrar shall fulfill this duty in accordance with the instructions of the
105 State Board so that those persons who registered by mail are identified on the registration records, lists
106 of registered voters furnished pursuant to § 24.2-405, lists of persons who voted furnished pursuant to
107 § 24.2-406, and pollbooks used for the conduct of elections.

108 6. Accept a registration application or request for transfer or change of address submitted by or for a
109 resident of any other county or city in the Commonwealth. Registrars shall process registration
110 applications and requests for transfer or change of address from residents of other counties and cities in
111 accordance with written instructions from the State Board and shall forward the completed application or
112 request to the registrar of the applicant's residence. Notwithstanding the provisions of § 24.2-416, the
113 registrar of the applicant's residence shall recognize as timely any application or request for transfer or
114 change of address submitted to any person authorized to receive voter registration applications pursuant
115 to Chapter 4 (§ 24.2-400 et seq.), prior to or on the final day of registration. The registrar of the
116 applicant's residence shall determine the qualification of the applicant, including whether the applicant
117 has ever been convicted of a felony, and if so, under what circumstances the applicant's right to vote has
118 been restored, and promptly notify the applicant at the address shown on the application or request of
119 the acceptance or denial of his registration or transfer. However, notification shall not be required when
120 the registrar does not have an address for the applicant.

7. Preserve order at and in the vicinity of the place of registration. For this purpose, the registrar shall be vested with the powers of a conservator of the peace while engaged in the duties imposed by law. He may exclude from the place of registration persons whose presence disturbs the registration process. He may appoint special officers, not exceeding three in number, for a place of registration and may summon persons in the vicinity to assist whenever, in his judgment, it is necessary to preserve order. The general registrar and any assistant registrar shall be authorized to administer oaths for purposes of this title.

8. Maintain the official registration records for his county or city in the system approved by, and in accordance with the instructions of, the State Board; preserve the written applications of all persons who are registered; and preserve for a period of four years the written applications of all persons who are denied registration or whose registration is cancelled.

9. If a person is denied registration, promptly notify such person in writing of the denial and the reason for denial in accordance with § 24.2-422.

10. Verify the accuracy of the pollbooks provided for each election by the State Board, make the pollbooks available to the precincts, and according to the instructions of the State Board provide a copy of the data from the pollbooks to the State Board after each election for voting credit purposes.

11. Retain the pollbooks in his principal office for two years from the date of the election.

12. Maintain accurate and current registration records and comply with the requirements of this title for the transfer, inactivation, and cancellation of voter registrations.

13. Whenever election districts, precincts, or polling places are altered, provide for entry into the voter registration system of the proper district and precinct designations for each registered voter whose districts or precinct have changed and notify each affected voter of changes affecting his districts or polling place by mail.

14. Whenever any part of his county or city becomes part of another jurisdiction by annexation, merger, or other means, transfer to the appropriate general registrar the registration records of the affected registered voters. The general registrar for their new county or city shall notify them by mail of the transfer and their new election districts and polling places.

15. When he registers any person who was previously registered in another state, notify the appropriate authority in that state of the person's registration in Virginia.

16. Whenever any person is believed to be registered or voting in more than one state or territory of the United States at the same time, inquire about, or provide information from the voter's registration and voting records to any appropriate voter registration or other authority of another state or territory who inquires about, that person's registration and voting history.

17. At the request of the county or city chairman of any political party nominating a candidate for the General Assembly, constitutional office, or local office by a method other than a primary, review any petition required by the party in its nomination process to determine whether those signing the petition are registered voters with active status.

18. Carry out such other duties as prescribed by the electoral board in his capacity as the director of elections for the locality in which he serves.

19. Attend, or designate one member of his staff to attend, an annual training program provided by the State Board.

§ 24.2-411. Office of the general registrar.

Each local governing body shall furnish the general registrar with a clearly marked and suitable office which shall be the principal office for voter registration. The office shall be owned or leased by the city or county, or by the state for the location of Department of Motor Vehicles facilities, adequately furnished, and located within the city or within the county or a city in which the county courthouse is located. The governing body shall provide property damage liability and bodily injury liability coverage for the office and shall furnish the general registrar with necessary postage, stationery, equipment, and office supplies. The telephone number shall be listed in the local telephone directory separately or under the local governmental listing under the designation "Voter Registration."

No private business enterprise shall be conducted in the general registrar's office.

The general registrar's office in counties with a population under 10,000 and in cities with a population under 7,500 shall be open a minimum of three days each week and additional days as required by the general appropriation act. The general registrar's office in all other counties and cities shall be open a minimum of five days each week. The specific days of normal service each week for general registrars shall be determined by the Commissioner of Elections.

Additional hours, if any, that the general registrar's office is open for voter registration may be determined and set by the general registrar or the electoral board.

The general registrar may close the office of the general registrar (i) for off-site training purposes for no more than four consecutive or cumulative days each year, provided that notice of the closure is posted on the official website of the county or city and in no fewer than two public places at least 72

182 *hours before such closure, and (ii) quarterly to provide training in the office for a period not to exceed*
183 *four hours without providing notice. However, no closure permitted by clause (i) or clause (ii) shall*
184 *occur (a) within the seven days immediately preceding and immediately following an election, (ii) during*
185 *the period for absentee voting required by subsection A of § 24.2-701, (iii) on the final registration day*
186 *pursuant to § 24.2-414, or (iv) on a deadline specified in the Campaign Finance Disclosure Act of 2006*
187 *(§ 24.2-945 et seq.).*