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SENATE BILL NO. 770

Offered January 10, 2018

Prefiled January 10, 2018

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 24.2-707 of the Code of Virginia, relating to absentee voting; alternative locations for in-person absentee voting.*

Patron—Surovell

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.

A. 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.

B. After the voter has marked his absentee ballot, he shall ~~(a)~~ (i) enclose the ballot in the envelope provided for that purpose; ~~(b)~~; (ii) seal the envelope; ~~(c)~~; (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; ~~(d)~~ (iv) enclose the ballot envelope and any required assistance form within the envelope directed to the general registrar; and ~~(e)~~ (v) seal that envelope and mail it to the office of the general registrar or deliver it personally to the general registrar. A voter's failure to provide in the statement on the back of the envelope his full middle name or his middle initial shall not be a material omission, rendering his ballot void, unless the voter failed to provide in the statement on the back of the envelope his full first and last name. A voter's failure to provide the date, or any part of the date, including the year, on which he signed the statement printed on the back of the envelope shall not be considered a material omission and shall not render his ballot void. For purposes of this chapter, "mail" shall include delivery by a commercial delivery service, but shall not include delivery by a personal courier service or another individual except as provided by §§ 24.2-703.2 and 24.2-705.

C. 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 in subsections A and B~~, except that he may complete the procedure in person in the office of the general registrar, or at another location or locations in the county or city approved by the electoral board, before a registrar; 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~~ facility owned or leased by the city, the county, or a town within the county, ~~with adequate facilities for the protection of~~ at which all records concerning the absentee voters, the absentee ballots, both voted and unvoted, and any voting equipment in use at the location ~~are adequately protected and secured~~. Such location may be in a facility owned or leased by the Commonwealth and used as a location for Department of Motor Vehicles facilities and for an office of the general registrar. Such location shall be deemed the equivalent of the office of the general registrar for the purpose of completing the application for an absentee ballot in person pursuant to §§ 24.2-701 and 24.2-706.

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 may send the items set forth in subdivisions 1 through 4 of § 24.2-706 to the applicant by mail, obtaining a certificate or other evidence of mailing.

D. Failure to follow the procedures set forth ~~above in this section~~ shall render the applicant's ballot void.

E. The general registrar 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 Department of Elections 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 Department of Elections. The procedures shall be applicable and uniformly applied by the Department of Elections 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

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59 to election day shall not be applicable when the voting equipment is located in the office of the general
60 registrar and the general registrar or an assistant registrar is present.