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SENATE BILL NO. 455

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
(Proposed by the House Committee on Privileges and Elections  
on February 28, 2020)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Reeves)

A BILL to amend and reenact § 24.2-709, as it is currently effective and as it shall become effective, of the Code of Virginia, relating to absentee voting; deadline for returning absentee ballot.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 24.2-709, as it is currently effective and as it shall become effective, of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 24.2-709. (Effective for elections prior to the general election on November 3, 2020) Ballot to be returned in manner prescribed by law.

A. Any ballot returned to the office of the general registrar in any manner except as prescribed by law shall be void. Absentee ballots shall be returned to the general registrar before the closing of the polls. The registrar receiving the ballot shall (i) seal the ballot in an envelope with the statement or declaration of the voter, or both, attached to the outside and (ii) mark on each envelope the date, time, and manner of delivery. No returned absentee ballot shall be deemed void because the inner envelope containing the voted ballot is imperfectly sealed so long as the outside envelope containing the ballot envelope is sealed.

B. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection A, any absentee ballot (i) returned to the general registrar after the closing of the polls on election day but before noon on the third day after the election and (ii) postmarked on or before the date of the election shall be counted pursuant to the procedures set forth in this chapter if the voter is found entitled to vote. For purposes of this subsection, a postmark shall include any other official indicia of confirmation of mailing by the United States Postal Service or other postal or delivery service.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection A, any absentee ballots ballot (i) received after the close of the polls on any election day, (ii) received before 5:00 p.m. on the second business day before the State Board meets to ascertain the results of the election pursuant to this title, (iii) requested on or before but not sent by the deadline for making absentee ballots available under § 24.2-612, and (iv) cast by an absentee voter who is eligible for an absentee ballot under subdivision 2 of § 24.2-700 shall be counted pursuant to the procedures set forth in this chapter and, if the voter is found entitled to vote, included in the election returns. The electoral board shall prepare an amended certified abstract, which shall include the results of such ballots, and shall deliver such abstract to the State Board by the business day prior to its meeting pursuant to this title, and shall deliver a copy of such abstract to the general registrar to be available for inspection when his office is open for business.

D. Notwithstanding the provisions of clause (i) of subsection B of § 24.2-427, an absentee ballot returned by a voter in compliance with § 24.2-707 and this section who dies prior to the counting of absentee ballots on election day shall be counted pursuant to the procedures set forth in this chapter if the voter is found to have been entitled to vote at the time that he returned the ballot.

§ 24.2-709. (Effective for elections beginning with the general election on November 3, 2020) Ballot to be returned in manner prescribed by law.

A. Any ballot returned to the office of the general registrar in any manner except as prescribed by law shall be void. Absentee ballots shall be returned to the general registrar before the closing of the polls. The registrar receiving the ballot shall (i) seal the ballot in an envelope with the statement or declaration of the voter, or both, attached to the outside and (ii) mark on each envelope the date, time, and manner of delivery. No returned absentee ballot shall be deemed void because the inner envelope containing the voted ballot is imperfectly sealed so long as the outside envelope containing the ballot envelope is sealed.

B. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection A, any absentee ballot (i) returned to the general registrar after the closing of the polls on election day but before noon on the third day after the election and (ii) postmarked on or before the date of the election shall be counted pursuant to the procedures set forth in this chapter if the voter is found entitled to vote. For purposes of this subsection, a postmark shall include any other official indicia of confirmation of mailing by the United States Postal Service or other postal or delivery service.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection A, any absentee ballots ballot (i) received after the close of the polls on any election day, (ii) received before 5:00 p.m. on the second business day before the State Board meets to ascertain the results of the election pursuant to this title, (iii) requested on or before but not sent by the deadline for making absentee ballots available under § 24.2-612, and (iv) cast by an absentee voter who is eligible for an absentee ballot under subdivision A 2 of § 24.2-700 shall be

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60 counted pursuant to the procedures set forth in this chapter ~~and~~, if the voter is found entitled to vote,  
61 ~~included in the election returns~~. The electoral board shall prepare an amended certified abstract, which  
62 shall include the results of such ballots, and shall deliver such abstract to the State Board by the  
63 business day prior to its meeting pursuant to this title, and shall deliver a copy of such abstract to the  
64 general registrar to be available for inspection when his office is open for business.

65 ~~C. D.~~ Notwithstanding the provisions of clause (i) of subsection B of § 24.2-427, an absentee ballot  
66 returned by a voter in compliance with § 24.2-707 and this section who dies prior to the counting of  
67 absentee ballots on election day shall be counted pursuant to the procedures set forth in this chapter if  
68 the voter is found to have been entitled to vote at the time that he returned the ballot.