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**HOUSE BILL NO. 939**

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled January 9, 2024

A *BILL to amend and reenact §§ 24.2-107, 24.2-411, 24.2-413, 24.2-604, 24.2-653.01, 24.2-671, 24.2-679, 24.2-701.2, 24.2-707.1, 24.2-712, and 24.2-802.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to elections administration; possession of firearm within 100 feet of locations used for certain voting-related and elections-related activities; penalty.*

Patrons—Shin, Clark, Lopez and Bennett-Parker

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

1. That §§ 24.2-107, 24.2-411, 24.2-413, 24.2-604, 24.2-653.01, 24.2-671, 24.2-679, 24.2-701.2, 24.2-707.1, 24.2-712, and 24.2-802.1 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

**§ 24.2-107. Meetings; quorum; notice; account of proceedings; seal; records open to inspection.**

A. The electoral board of each city and county shall meet during the first week in February of the year in which it is to appoint officers of election pursuant to § 24.2-115 and during the month of March each year at the time set by the board and at any other time on the call of any board member. Two members shall constitute a quorum. Notice of each meeting shall be given to all board members either by the secretary or the member calling the meeting at least three business days prior to the meeting except in the case of an emergency as defined in § 2.2-3701. Notice shall be given to the public as required by § 2.2-3707. All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.) unless otherwise provided by this section.

Notwithstanding the public notice requirements of § 2.2-3707, two or more members of an electoral board may meet on election day to discuss a matter concerning that day's election, where such matter requires resolution on that day, and an effort has been made by all available means to give notice of the meeting to all board members. The presence of two or more board members while the ballots, election materials, or voting equipment are being prepared, current or potential polling places are being inspected, or election officials are being trained, or a telephone call between two board members preparing for a meeting, shall not constitute a meeting provided that no discussion or deliberation takes place that would otherwise constitute a meeting.

B. The secretary shall keep an accurate account of all board proceedings in a minute book, including all appointments and removals of general registrars and officers of election. The secretary shall keep in his custody the duly adopted seal of the board.

C. Minutes of meetings that are required to be recorded pursuant to § 2.2-3707 shall be posted on the website of the electoral board or the official website for the county or city, when such means are available. Minutes of meetings shall be posted as soon as possible but no later than one week prior to the following meeting of the electoral board.

D. Books, papers, and records of the board shall be open to public inspection and copying whenever the general registrar's office is open for business either at the office of the board or the office of the general registrar. The general registrar shall determine a reasonable charge, not to exceed the fee authorized pursuant to subdivision A 8 of § 17.1-275, to be paid for copies made from the books, papers, and records of the board. No election record containing an individual's social security number, or any part thereof, shall be made available for inspection or copying by anyone. The State Board of Elections shall prescribe procedures for local electoral boards and general registrars to make the information in certificates of candidate qualification available in a manner that does not reveal social security numbers or any parts thereof.

E. It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess any firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as a meeting place for the local electoral board, unless such person is (i) a law-enforcement officer or a retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of § 18.2-308.016; (ii) occupying his own private property that falls within 100 feet of the building used as a meeting place; or (iii) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs within 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as a meeting place for the local electoral board.

**§ 24.2-411. Office of the general registrar.**

A. 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

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

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

66 B. The general registrar's office in all counties and cities shall be open a minimum of five days each  
67 week, except as provided in subsection C.

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

70 C. The general registrar may close the office of the general registrar (i) for off-site training purposes  
71 for no more than four consecutive or cumulative days each year, provided that notice of the closure is  
72 posted on the official website of the county or city and in no fewer than two public places at least 72  
73 hours before such closure, and (ii) quarterly to provide training in the office for a period not to exceed  
74 four hours without providing notice. However, no closure permitted by clause (i) or clause (ii) shall  
75 occur (a) within the seven days immediately preceding and immediately following an election, (b)  
76 during the period for absentee voting required by subsection A of § 24.2-701, (c) on the final  
77 registration day pursuant to § 24.2-414, or (d) on a deadline specified in the Campaign Finance  
78 Disclosure Act of 2006 (§ 24.2-945 et seq.).

79 D. *It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess any firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within  
80 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as the principal office for voter registration, unless such  
81 person is (i) a law-enforcement officer or a retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to  
82 subsection C of § 18.2-308.016; (ii) occupying his own private property that falls within 100 feet of the  
83 principal office for voter registration; or (iii) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4  
84 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs  
85 within 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as the principal office for voter registration.*

86 **§ 24.2-413. Additional registration locations; accessibility requirements; prohibited conduct.**

87 A. The office of the general registrar, and each agency, business, and establishment set for  
88 registration pursuant to §§ 24.2-411.2 and 24.2-411.3 and subsection B of § 24.2-412 shall be accessible  
89 as required by the provisions of the Virginians with Disabilities Act (§ 51.5-1 et seq.), the Voting  
90 Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act (52 U.S.C. § 20101 et seq.), and the Americans with  
91 Disabilities Act relating to public services (42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq.). The Department shall provide  
92 instructions to the Department of Motor Vehicles, state-designated voter registration agencies, local  
93 electoral boards, and general registrars to assist them in complying with the requirements of the Acts.

94 In the selection of additional registration sites as provided in § 24.2-412, consideration shall be given  
95 to accessibility so that a reasonable number of accessible sites are provided and the requirements of the  
96 above cited Acts are met.

97 B. *It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess any firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within  
98 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as an additional registration site, unless such person is  
99 (i) a law-enforcement officer or a retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of  
100 § 18.2-308.016; (ii) occupying his own private property that falls within 100 feet of the additional  
101 registration site; or (iii) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of  
102 Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs within 100 feet of the  
103 additional registration site.*

104 **§ 24.2-604. Polling places; prohibited activities; prohibited area; penalties.**

105 A. During the times the polls are open and ballots are being counted, or within one hour of opening  
106 or after closing, it is unlawful for any person (i) to loiter or congregate within 40 feet of any entrance of  
107 any polling place; (ii) within such distance to give, tender, or exhibit any ballot, ticket, or other  
108 campaign material to any person or to solicit or in any manner attempt to influence any person in  
109 casting his vote; (iii) to hinder or delay a qualified voter in entering or leaving a polling place; or (iv) to  
110 knowingly possess any firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within 40 100 feet of any building, or part  
111 thereof, used as a polling place.

112 B. Prior to opening the polls, the officers of election shall post, in the area within 40 feet of any  
113 entrance to the polling place, sufficient notices that state "Prohibited Area" in two-inch type, *except that*  
114 *notice of prohibited firearm possession shall be posted in the area within 100 feet of the entrance.* The  
115 notices shall also state the provisions of this section in not less than 24-point type. The officers of  
116 election shall post the notices within the prohibited area to be visible to voters and the public.

117 C. It is unlawful for any authorized representative permitted in the polling place pursuant to  
118 § 24.2-604.4, any voter, or any other person in the room to (i) hinder or delay a qualified voter; (ii)  
119 give, tender, or exhibit any ballot, ticket, or other campaign material to any person; (iii) solicit or in any  
120 manner attempt to influence any person in casting his vote; (iv) hinder or delay any officer of election;

(v) be in a position to see the marked ballot of any other voter; or (vi) otherwise impede the orderly conduct of the election.

D. The provisions of subsections A and C shall not be construed to prohibit a person who approaches or enters the polling place for the purpose of voting from wearing a shirt, hat, or other apparel on which a candidate's name or a political slogan appears or from having a sticker or button attached to his apparel on which a candidate's name or a political slogan appears. This exemption shall not apply to candidates, representatives of candidates, or any other person who approaches or enters the polling place for any purpose other than voting.

E. This section shall not be construed to prohibit a candidate from entering any polling place on the day of the election to vote, or to visit a polling place for no longer than 10 minutes per polling place per election day, provided that he complies with the restrictions stated in subsections A, C, and D.

F. The provisions of clause (iv) of subsection A shall not apply to (i) any law-enforcement officer or any retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of § 18.2-308.016; (ii) any person occupying his own private property that falls within 40 100 feet of a polling place; or (iii) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs within 40 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as a polling place.

G. The officers of election may require any person who is found by a majority of the officers present to be in violation of this section to remain outside of the prohibited area. Any person violating subsection A or C is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

**§ 24.2-653.01. Provisional ballots; electoral boards to make determination as to validity.**

A. The electoral board shall meet on the day following the election and determine whether each person having submitted a provisional vote pursuant to § 24.2-653 was entitled to do so as a qualified voter in the precinct in which he offered the provisional vote. In the case of persons voting provisionally pursuant to § 24.2-653.3, the electoral board shall determine of which district the person is a qualified voter. At the meeting, the voter may request an extension of the determination of the provisional vote in order to provide information to prove that the voter is entitled to vote in the precinct pursuant to § 24.2-401. The electoral board shall have the authority to grant such extensions that it deems reasonable to determine the status of a provisional vote.

If the board is unable to determine the validity of all the provisional ballots offered in the election, or has granted any voter who has offered a provisional ballot an extension, the meeting shall stand adjourned, not to exceed seven calendar days from the date of the election, until the board has determined the validity of all provisional ballots offered in the election.

B. The electoral board shall permit one authorized representative of each political party or independent candidate in a general or special election or one authorized representative of each candidate in a primary election to remain in the room in which the determination is being made as an observer so long as he does not participate in the proceedings and does not impede the orderly conduct of the determination. Each authorized representative shall be a qualified voter of any jurisdiction of the Commonwealth. Each representative, who is not himself a candidate or party chairman, shall present to the electoral board a written statement designating him to be a representative of the party or candidate and signed by the county or city chairman of his political party, the independent candidate, or the primary candidate, as appropriate. If the county or city chairman is unavailable to sign such a written designation, such a designation may be made by the state or district chairman of the political party. However, no written designation made by a state or district chairman shall take precedence over a written designation made by the county or city chairman. Such statement, bearing the chairman's or candidate's original signature, may be photocopied and such photocopy shall be as valid as if the copy had been signed.

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.), attendance at meetings of the electoral board to determine the validity of provisional ballots shall be permitted only for the authorized representatives provided for in this subsection, for the persons whose provisional votes are being considered and their representative or legal counsel, and for appropriate staff and legal counsel for the electoral board.

C. If the electoral board determines that such person was not entitled to vote as a qualified voter in the precinct or district in which he offered the provisional vote, is unable to determine his right to vote, or has not been provided one of the forms of identification specified in subsection B of § 24.2-643, or the signed statement that the voter is the named registered voter he claims to be, the envelope containing his ballot shall not be opened and his vote shall not be counted. The general registrar shall notify in writing pursuant to § 24.2-114 those persons found not properly registered or whose provisional vote was not counted.

The provisional vote shall be counted if (i) such person is entitled to vote in the precinct pursuant to § 24.2-401 or (ii) the Department of Elections or the voter presents proof that indicates the voter

submitted an application for registration to a state-designated voter registration agency or the voter's information was transmitted by the Department of Motor Vehicles to the Department of Elections pursuant to § 24.2-411.3 prior to the close of registration pursuant to § 24.2-416 and the registrar determines that the person was qualified for registration based upon the application for registration submitted by the person pursuant to subsection B of § 24.2-652.

If the electoral board determines that such person was entitled to vote, the name of the voter shall be entered in a provisional votes pollbook and marked as having voted, the envelope shall be opened, and the ballot shall be placed in a ballot container without any inspection further than that provided for in § 24.2-646.

D. On completion of its determination, the electoral board shall proceed to count such ballots and certify the results of its count. Its certified results shall be added to those found pursuant to § 24.2-671. No adjustment shall be made to the statement of results for the precinct in which the person offered to vote. However, any voter who cast a provisional ballot and is determined by the electoral board to have been entitled to vote shall have his name included on the list of persons who voted that is submitted to the Department of Elections pursuant to § 24.2-406.

E. The certification of the results of the count together with all ballots and envelopes, whether open or unopened, and other related material shall be delivered by the electoral board to the clerk of the circuit court and retained by him as provided for in §§ 24.2-668 and 24.2-669.

*F. It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess any firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as the meeting place for the local electoral board while the electoral board meets pursuant to this section, unless such person is (i) a law-enforcement officer or a retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of § 18.2-308.016; (ii) occupying his own private property that falls within 100 feet of such building, or part thereof, used as the meeting place for the local electoral board while the electoral board meets pursuant to this section; or (iii) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs within 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as the meeting place for the local electoral board while the electoral board meets pursuant to this section.*

**§ 24.2-671. Electoral board to meet and ascertain results; conclusiveness of results.**

A. Each electoral board shall meet at the clerk's or general registrar's office of the county or city for which they are appointed at or before 5:00 p.m. on the day after any election. The board may adjourn to another room of sufficient size in a public building to ascertain the results, and may adjourn as needed, not to exceed seven calendar days from the date of the election unless an extension has been granted to accommodate a risk-limiting audit conducted pursuant to § 24.2-671.2. Written directions to the location of any room other than the clerk's or general registrar's office where the board will meet shall be posted at the doors of the clerk's and general registrar's offices prior to the beginning of the meeting.

~~The board shall open the returns delivered by the officers.~~

If the electoral board has exercised the option provided by § 24.2-668 for delivery of the election materials to the office of the general registrar on the night of the election, the electoral board shall meet at the office of the general registrar at or before 5:00 p.m. on the day after any election.

B. The board shall ~~open the returns delivered by the officers and~~ ascertain from the returns the total votes in the county or city, or town in a town election, for each candidate and for and against each question and complete the abstract of votes cast at such election, as provided for in § 24.2-675. For any office in which no person was elected by write-in votes, and for which the total number of write-in votes for that office is less than (i) 10 percent of the total number of votes cast for that office and (ii) the total number of votes cast for the candidate receiving the most votes, the electoral board shall ascertain the total votes for each write-in candidate for the office within one week following the election. For offices for which the electoral board issues the certificate of election, the result so ascertained, signed and attested, shall be conclusive and shall not thereafter be subject to challenge except as specifically provided in Chapter 8 (§ 24.2-800 et seq.).

Once the result is so ascertained, the secretary of the electoral board shall deliver one copy of each statement of results to the general registrar to be available for inspection when his office is open for business. The secretary shall then return all pollbooks, any printed inspection and return sheets, and one copy of each statement of results to the clerk.

~~Beginning with the general election in November 2007, a~~ C. A report of any changes made by the local electoral board to the unofficial results ascertained by the officers of election or any subsequent change to the official abstract of votes made by the local electoral board shall be forwarded to the State Board of Elections and the explanation of such change shall be posted on the State Board website.

D. Each political party and each independent candidate on the ballot, or each primary candidate, shall be entitled to have representatives present when the local electoral board meets to ascertain the results of the election. Each such party and candidate shall be entitled to have at least as many representatives present as there are teams of officials working to ascertain the results, and the room in which the local electoral board meets shall be of sufficient size and configuration to allow the representatives reasonable

access and proximity to view the ballots as the teams of officials work to ascertain the results. The representatives and observers lawfully present shall be prohibited from interfering with the officials in any way.

E. It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess any firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within 40 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as a meeting place for the local electoral board while the electoral board meets to ascertain the results of an election, unless such person is ~~(a)~~ (i) any law-enforcement officer or any retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of § 18.2-308.016; ~~(b)~~ (ii) occupying his own private property that falls within 40 100 feet of a polling place; or ~~(c)~~ (iii) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs within 40 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as a meeting place for the local electoral board while the electoral board meets to ascertain the results of an election.

**§ 24.2-679. State Board to meet and make statement as to number of votes.**

A. The State Board shall meet by the first Monday in December to ascertain the results of the November election. If a majority of the Board is not present or if, for any other reason, the Board is unable to ascertain the results on that day, the meeting shall stand adjourned from day to day for not more than three days until a quorum is present and the Board has ascertained the results as provided in this section.

The Board shall examine the certified abstracts on file in its office and make statements of the whole number of votes given at any such election for members of the General Assembly, Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General, members of the United States Congress and electors of President and Vice President of the United States, and any officer shared by more than one county or city, or any combination thereof, or for so many of such officers as have been voted for at the election.

The statement shall show, for each office and each county, city, and election district, the whole number of votes given to each candidate and to any other person elected to office. The Board members shall certify the statements to be correct and sign the statements. The Board shall then determine those persons who received the greatest number of votes and have been duly elected to each office. The Board members shall endorse and subscribe on such statements a certificate of their determination. The Board shall record each certified statement and determination in a suitable book to be kept by it in its office.

B. The State Board shall meet as soon as possible after it receives the returns for any special election held at a time other than the November general election to ascertain the results of the special election in the manner prescribed in subsection A. If the returns have not been received within seven days of the election, the Board shall meet and adjourn from day to day until it receives the returns, ascertains the results, and makes its determination.

*C. It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess any firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as a meeting place for the State Board pursuant to this section, unless such person is (i) a law-enforcement officer or a retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of § 18.2-308.016; (ii) occupying his own private property that falls within 100 feet of the building used as such a meeting place; or (iii) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs within 100 feet of any building, or part thereof, used as such a meeting place.*

**§ 24.2-701.2. Absentee voting in person; voter satellite offices.**

A. The governing body of any county or city may establish, by ordinance, voter satellite offices to be used in the locality for absentee voting in person. The governing body may establish as many offices as it deems necessary. No change in, including the creation or abolishment of, any voter satellite office shall be enacted within 60 days next preceding any general election. Notice shall be published prior to enactment in a newspaper having general circulation in the locality once a week for two successive weeks.

B. Any voter satellite office shall be in a public building owned or leased by the county, city, or town within the county and may be in a facility that is owned or leased by the Commonwealth and used as a location for Department of Motor Vehicles facilities or as an office of the general registrar. Such location shall be deemed the equivalent of the office of the general registrar for the purposes of completing the application for an absentee ballot in person pursuant to §§ 24.2-701 and 24.2-706. Any such location shall have adequate facilities for the protection of all elections materials produced in the process of absentee voting in person, the voted and unvoted absentee ballots, and any voting systems in use at the location.

C. Voter satellite offices shall be accessible to qualified voters as required by the provisions of the Virginians with Disabilities Act (§ 51.5-1 et seq.), the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act (52 U.S.C. § 20101 et seq.), and the Americans with Disabilities Act relating to public services (42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq.). The State Board shall provide instructions to the local electoral boards and general registrars to assist the localities in complying with the requirements of the acts. *It is*

305 *unlawful for any person to knowingly possess any firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within 100 feet*  
306 *of any building, or part thereof, used as a voter satellite office, unless such person is (i) a*  
307 *law-enforcement officer or a retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of*  
308 *§ 18.2-308.016; (ii) occupying his own private property that falls within 100 feet of the building used as*  
309 *a voter satellite office; or (iii) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et*  
310 *seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs within 100 feet of*  
311 *any building, or part thereof, used as a voter satellite office.*

312 D. The governing body of each county, city, and town shall provide funds to enable the general  
313 registrar to provide adequate facilities at each voter satellite office for the conduct of elections.

314 E. Not later than 55 days prior to any election, the general registrar shall post notice of all voter  
315 satellite office locations in the locality and the dates and hours of operation of each location in the  
316 office of the general registrar and on the official website for the county or city. Such notice shall remain  
317 in the office of the general registrar and on the official website for the county or city for the duration of  
318 the period during which absentee voting in person is available. If the county or city does not have an  
319 official website, such notice shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county or  
320 city at least once prior to the election but not later than 55 days prior to such election.

321 F. If an emergency makes a voter satellite office unusable or inaccessible, the electoral board or the  
322 general registrar shall provide an alternative voter satellite office, subject to the approval of the State  
323 Board, and shall give notice of the change in the location of the voter satellite office. The general  
324 registrar shall provide notice to the voters appropriate to the circumstances of the emergency. For the  
325 purposes of this subsection, "emergency" means a rare and unforeseen combination of circumstances, or  
326 the resulting state, that calls for immediate action.

327 G. The provisions of subsection E of § 24.2-310 providing certain limited circumstances in which a  
328 local electoral board may approve an exception to the prohibition on the distribution of campaign  
329 materials inside the prohibited area outside of a polling place shall apply to voter satellite offices and  
330 the building in which such offices may be located.

331 H. A voter satellite office established pursuant to this section shall be deemed to be the equivalent of  
332 an office of the general registrar for purposes of completing an application for an absentee ballot in  
333 person pursuant to §§ 24.2-701, 24.2-701.1, and 24.2-706.

334 **§ 24.2-707.1. Drop-off locations for return of absentee ballots.**

335 A. The general registrar of each county or city shall establish at the office of the general registrar  
336 and each voter satellite office in operation for an election a drop-off location for the purpose of allowing  
337 the deposit of completed absentee ballots for such election. On the day of the election, there shall also  
338 be a drop-off location at each polling place in operation for the election. The general registrar may  
339 establish additional drop-off locations within the county or city as he deems necessary. All drop-off  
340 locations shall be accessible; be on public property, unless located at a polling place; and otherwise  
341 comply with any criteria for drop-off locations set by the Department.

342 B. The Department shall set standards for the establishment and operation of drop-off locations,  
343 including necessary security requirements. The Department shall submit such standards annually by  
344 October 1 to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Privileges and Elections, the Senate  
345 Committee on Finance and Appropriations, and the House Committee on Appropriations.

346 C. Not later than 55 days prior to any election, the general registrar shall post notice of the sites of  
347 the drop-off locations in the locality in the office of the general registrar and on the official website of  
348 the county or city. Such notice shall remain in the office of the general registrar and on the official  
349 website of the county or city for the duration of the period during which absentee ballots may be  
350 returned.

351 D. Absentee ballots shall be collected from drop-off locations in accordance with the instructions  
352 provided by the Department. Such instructions shall include chain of custody requirements and  
353 recordkeeping requirements. Absentee ballots shall be collected at least daily by (i) two officers of  
354 election or electoral board members representing the two major political parties where practicable or (ii)  
355 two employees from the office of the general registrar, unless the drop-off location is in the office of the  
356 general registrar, in which case the general registrar or a deputy general registrar may collect the  
357 absentee ballots.

358 E. *It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess a firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within*  
359 *100 feet of any drop-off location, unless such person is (i) a law-enforcement officer or a retired*  
360 *law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of § 18.2-308.016; (ii) occupying his own*  
361 *private property that falls within 100 feet of any drop-off location; or (iii) an armed security officer,*  
362 *licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or*  
363 *performance of his duties occurs within 100 feet of any drop-off location.*

364 **§ 24.2-712. Central absentee voter precincts; counting ballots.**

365 A. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the governing body of each county or city shall  
366 establish one or more central absentee voter precincts in the courthouse or other public buildings for the

purpose of receiving, counting, and recording absentee ballots cast in the county or city. A central absentee voter precinct shall be made by the governing body by ordinance; the ordinance shall state for which elections the precinct shall be used. The decision to abolish any absentee voter precinct shall be made by the governing body by ordinance. Immediate notification of either decision shall be sent to the Department of Elections and the electoral board.

B. Each central absentee voter precinct shall have at least three officers of election as provided for other precincts. The number of officers shall be determined by the electoral board and general registrar.

C. If any voter brings an unmarked ballot to the central absentee voter precinct on the day of the election, he shall be allowed to vote it. If any voter brings an unmarked ballot to the general registrar on or before the day of the election, he shall be allowed to vote it, and his ballot shall be delivered to the absentee voter precinct.

D. Absentee ballots shall be processed as required by § 24.2-709.1 by the officers of election at the central absentee voter precinct prior to the closing of the polls. In the case of machine-readable ballots, the ballot container shall be opened and the absentee ballots shall be inserted in the counting machines prior to the closing of the polls in accordance with procedures prescribed by the Department of Elections, including procedures to preserve ballot secrecy, but no ballot count totals by the machines shall be transmitted outside of the central absentee voter precinct until after the closing of the polls.

In the case of absentee ballots that are counted by hand, the officers of election shall begin tallying such ballots at any time after noon on the day of the election in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Department of Elections, including procedures to preserve ballot secrecy. No counts of such tallies shall be determined or transmitted outside of the central absentee voter precinct until after the closing of the polls.

The use of cellular telephones or other communication devices shall be prohibited in the central absentee voter precinct during such processing and tallying and until the closing of the polls. Any person present in the central absentee voter precinct shall sign a statement under oath that he will not transmit any counts prior to the closing of the polls. Any person who transmits any counts in violation of this section is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

E. As soon as the polls are closed in the county or city, the officers of election at the central absentee voter precinct shall proceed promptly to ascertain and record the total vote given by all absentee ballots and report the results in the manner provided for counting and reporting ballots generally in Article 4 (§ 24.2-643 et seq.) of Chapter 6.

F. The electoral board or general registrar may provide that the officers of election for a central absentee voter precinct may be assigned to work all or a portion of the time that the precinct is open on election day subject to the following conditions:

1. The chief officer and the assistant chief officer, appointed pursuant to § 24.2-115 to represent the two political parties, are on duty at all times; and

2. No officer, political party representative, or other candidate representative shall leave the precinct after any ballots have been counted until the polls are closed and the count for the precinct is completed and reported.

G. The general registrar may provide that the central absentee voter precinct will open after 6:00 a.m. on the day of the election provided that the office of the general registrar will be open for the receipt of absentee ballots until the central absentee voter precinct is open and that the officers of election for the central absentee voter precinct obtain the absentee ballots returned to the general registrar's office for the purpose of counting the absentee ballots at the central absentee voter precinct and provided further that the central absentee voter precinct is the same location as the office of the general registrar.

*H. It is unlawful for any person to knowingly possess a firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within 100 feet of any central absentee voter precinct, unless such person is (i) a law-enforcement officer or a retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of § 18.2-308.016; (ii) occupying his own private property that falls within 100 feet of any central absentee voter precinct; or (iii) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs within 100 feet of any central absentee voter precinct.*

**§ 24.2-802.1. Preliminary hearing; court to fix procedure for recount, appoint officers, and supervise the recount.**

A. Within seven calendar days of the filing of the petition for a recount of any election other than an election for presidential electors, or within five calendar days of the filing of a petition for a recount of an election for presidential electors, the chief judge of the circuit court shall call a preliminary hearing at which (i) motions may be disposed of and (ii) the rules of procedure may be fixed, both subject to review by the full court. The petitioner and his counsel and each other party and their counsel under supervision of the electoral board and its agents shall have access to pollbooks and other materials used in the election for examination purposes, provided that individual ballots cast in the election shall not be

428 examined at the preliminary hearing. The chief judge during the preliminary hearing shall review all  
429 security measures taken for all ballots and voting systems and direct, as he deems necessary, all  
430 appropriate measures to ensure proper security to conduct the recount.

431 The chief judge, subject to review by the full court, may set the place for the recount and may order  
432 the delivery of election materials to a central location and the transportation of voting systems to a  
433 central location in each county or city under appropriate safeguards. These safeguards shall include  
434 prohibiting any person from knowingly possessing any firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 within 40  
435 100 feet of any building or part thereof used as the place for the recount, unless such person is (a) any  
436 law-enforcement officer or any retired law-enforcement officer qualified pursuant to subsection C of  
437 § 18.2-308.016; (b) occupying his own private property that falls within 40 100 feet of a polling place;  
438 or (c) an armed security officer, licensed pursuant to Article 4 (§ 9.1-138 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title  
439 9.1, whose employment or performance of his duties occurs within 40 100 feet of any building, or part  
440 thereof, used as a place for the recount.

441 B. After the full court is appointed under § 24.2-801 or 24.2-801.1, it shall call a hearing at which  
442 all motions shall be disposed of and the rules of procedure shall be fixed finally, and it shall issue a  
443 written order setting out such rules of procedure. The court shall call for the advice and cooperation of  
444 the Department, the State Board, or any local electoral board, as appropriate, and such boards or agency  
445 shall have the duty and authority to assist the court. The court shall fix any additional procedures, that  
446 are not provided for in this chapter, that shall provide for the accurate counting of votes in the election.  
447 The recount procedures to be followed throughout the election district shall be as uniform as practicable,  
448 taking into account the types of ballots and voting systems in use in the election district.

449 C. The court shall permit each candidate, or petitioner and governing body or chief executive officer,  
450 to select an equal number of the officers of election to be recount officials and to count printed ballots.  
451 The number shall be fixed by the court and be sufficient to conduct the recount within a reasonable  
452 period. The court may permit each party to the recount to submit a list of alternate officials in the  
453 number the court directs. There shall be at least one team from each locality using ballot scanner  
454 machines to insert the ballots into one or more scanners. Each team shall be composed of one  
455 representative of each party.

456 The court may provide that if, at the time of the recount, any recount official fails to appear, the  
457 remaining recount officials present shall appoint substitute recount officials who shall possess the same  
458 qualifications as the recount officials for whom they substitute. The court may select pairs of recount  
459 coordinators to serve for each county or city in the election district who shall be members of the county  
460 or city electoral board and represent different political parties. The court shall have authority to summon  
461 such officials and coordinators. On the request of any party to the recount, the court shall allow that  
462 party to appoint one representative observer for each team of recount officials. The representative  
463 observers shall have an unobstructed view of the work of the recount officials. The expenses of its  
464 representatives shall be borne by each party.

465 D. The court (i) shall supervise the recount and (ii) may require delivery of any or all pollbooks used  
466 and any or all ballots cast at the election, or may assume supervision thereof through the recount  
467 coordinators and officials.