

CCS HCS SS SB 786 -- ELECTIONS

ELECTION CHALLENGERS AND WATCHERS (Sections 115.105 and 115.107, RSMo)

Currently, challengers are only permitted to remain present at a polling place during the hours of voting. This bill permits challengers to be present at a polling place until all ballots are cast on the day of election.

The bill further permits watchers to remain present at a polling place, or place at which absentee ballots are counted, until all closing certification forms are completed, all equipment is closed and taken down, the transportation case for the ballots is sealed, and election materials are returned to the election authority or to the designated collection place for a polling place.

TAX AFFIDAVIT--POLITICAL PARTY COMMITTEE CANDIDATES (Section 115.306)

Currently, all candidates for public office are required to file a tax affidavit with the Department of Revenue as well as a copy with the declaration of candidacy submitted to the Secretary of State. Under this bill, candidates for a county or city committee are exempt from this requirement.

CANDIDATE FILING DEADLINES (Section 115.361)

Currently, when a candidate files a statement of withdrawal within two working days prior to the deadline for the close of filing, the time of filing for the relevant office is extended until 5:00 p.m. on the first Friday following the close of deadline that is established under law. This bill changes that so that when a candidate files a statement of withdrawal within two working days prior to the deadline, filing shall reopen on the first Tuesday following the established deadline and last until 5:00 p.m. on the next Friday.

POLITICAL PARTY COMMITTEES (Sections 115.603-115.621)

The St. Louis City political party committee shall be designated as a city committee and not a county committee.

Currently, if a member of a county committee of a political party ever becomes disabled, that member's seat becomes vacant. This bill removes that provision.

The membership of legislative district committees is changed so that each committee is made up of the precinct, ward, or township

committeemen and committeewomen from each precinct, ward, or township included in whole or in part of a legislative district. The bill also changes the membership of congressional, senatorial, or judicial district committees.

The bill permits a political party to provide for proxy voting in any district committee. In the event that such provisions are not made, proxy voting is only allowed for legislative, congressional, senatorial, and judicial district committees. Persons who serve as a proxy voter must be legally permitted to vote in the district of the committee for which they intend to serve as a proxy voter. The bill also changes the meeting times for district committees. Any legislative, senatorial, or judicial district committee that is wholly contained within a county or a city not within a county is permitted to meet at the same date as the respective city or county committee.

These provisions of the bill have an emergency clause.

#### INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF ELECTION OFFENSES (Section 115.642)

This bill permits any person to file a complaint alleging an election offense with the Secretary of State and grants the Secretary the authority to investigate such claims. Within 30 days of receiving a complaint, the Secretary of State shall notify the complainant whether the complaint has been dismissed or if the Secretary will commence an investigation. In the event that the Secretary finds reasonable grounds that an election offense has been committed, the Secretary may issue a probable cause statement. If the Secretary issues a probable cause statement, he or she may refer the offense to the appropriate prosecuting attorney.

The bill further permits the Secretary of State to assist any prosecuting attorney or circuit attorney in the prosecution of election offenses when requested to do so by a prosecuting attorney or circuit attorney.

#### ELECTRONIC VOTER REGISTRATION (Section 115.960)

The bill modifies the provisions relating to voter registration. Specifically, the bill permits election authorities to accept voter registration applications with a signature submitted in accordance with the Uniform Electronic Transmissions Act. Further, the Secretary of State is required to maintain a system used to accept voter registration applications electronically subsequent to approval from a committee assembled for the purpose of approving and developing uniform standards, systems, and modifications to such a system.

ELECTRONIC FILING WITH THE MEC (Sections 130.026 and 130.057)

This bill modifies provisions relating to the appropriate filing officers for the filing of reports under campaign finance laws. Continuing committees which make contributions totaling more than \$15,000 in an applicable calendar year are required to file disclosure reports in an electronic format. All other continuing committees are given the option to file reports in electronic or paper format. This bill repeals those requirements and instead requires all committees to file electronically.

The bill further repeals obsolete language relating to the establishment of an electronic reporting system by the Ethics Commission.