



Missouri House of Representatives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 2, 2024

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Missouri House Passes Comprehensive Election Reform Bill to Improve Missouri's Electoral Process

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri House of Representatives has taken a significant step towards improving election procedures with the passage of HB 2140. Sponsored by State Representative Peggy McGaugh, the bill passed with the hopes of bringing about several crucial changes to election administration in the state.

HB 2140 addresses various aspects of the electoral process, from updating filing dates for candidacy declarations to enhancing protections for election officials. The bill also introduces measures aimed at safeguarding the integrity of absentee voting and expands access to provisional ballots.

Rep. McGaugh expressed her enthusiasm for the positive impact HB 2140 will have on Missouri's elections, noting that the provisional changes are improve election administration, clarify procedures, and provide additional protections for election officials:

"As the sponsor of HB 2140, I am proud to see this comprehensive election reform bill pass out of the Missouri House. These reforms are necessary to streamline our election procedures, enhance transparency, and protect the rights of voters. I am confident that this legislation will contribute to the integrity and efficiency of our electoral process."

Here is a breakdown of the key provisions and changes proposed in the bill:

- **Notification of Elections via Email:** The bill allows the officer or agency responsible for calling an election to notify the election authority via email.
- **Changes to Filing Dates for Declaration of Candidacy:** The bill alters the opening and closing dates for filing a declaration of candidacy for offices in political subdivisions or special districts.
- **In-Person Voting for Covered Voters:** Covered voters, including those eligible to register to vote, interstate former residents, and new residents, may now vote at the office of the election authority on Election Day for presidential and vice presidential electors.

- **Confidentiality of Lists of Absentee Voters with Permanent Disabilities:** The bill specifies that lists of absentee voters with permanent disabilities shall be kept confidential and not be publicly displayed or shown to unauthorized persons.
- **Signature Verification for Absentee Ballots:** Election authorities are required to compare the signature on the absentee ballot envelope with the signature on the voter's registration record. Inconsistent signatures will result in rejection of the ballot.
- **Expansion of Provisional Ballots:** Provisional ballots, previously available only at elections with federal or statewide candidates or measures, are now available at any public election.
- **New Election Offenses and Penalties:** Threatening or harassing election officials, attempting to pressure them to violate election laws, and doxxing them or their families are designated as election offenses, with varying degrees of severity.
- **Extension of Electioneering Restrictions:** Restrictions on electioneering activities, previously applicable only near polling locations on Election Day, are extended to locations where in-person absentee voting occurs during the absentee voting period. Circulating initiative and referendum petitions are also added to the list of prohibited activities near polling locations.
- **Creation of Missouri Elections Sovereignty Act:** This act reserves the right for the State of Missouri to determine the time, place, and manner of its state elections, asserting that federal laws regulating elections shall apply only to federal elections.

House Speaker Dean Plocher commended the collaborative efforts of legislators in advancing meaningful election reform, saying, "Missouri will operate its elections independently; the federal government will not dictate how our state and local elections are ran. For voters, this bill protects the disabled, requires signature verification on all absentee ballot envelopes, and expands restrictions on electioneering to prevent efforts to intimidate or harass votes at the polls. Each component of this bill works to protect voters and the integrity of our elections."

HB 2140 received bipartisan support during its passage through the House, reflecting a shared commitment to improving election administration and protecting the democratic rights of Missourians.

The bill will now move to the Missouri Senate for further consideration.

Representative Peggy McGaugh, a Republican, represents Carroll, Linn, Livingston, and part of Ray counties, proudly serving the 7th District in the Missouri House of Representatives. For more information, please contact Rep. McGaugh's office at 573-751-2917 or via email at Peggy.McGaugh@House.Mo.Gov.

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