

HB 1826 -- ELECTIONS

SPONSOR: McGaugh

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elections by a vote of 11 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on State and Local Government by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill allows each challenger and watcher designated by the county committee chair of each political party named on the ballot to be present until all closing certification forms are completed, all equipment is closed and taken down, the transportation case for the ballots is sealed, election materials are returned to the election authority or to the designated collection place for a polling place, and any other duties or procedures required under Sections 115.447 to 115.491, RSMo, are completed. A challenger and watcher may stay at each location where absentee ballots are being prepared for counting and remain until the absentee ballots are counted.

The bill changes the laws regarding voter registration and petition signature requirements. In its main provisions, the bill:

- (1) Authorizes an election authority to accept voter registration applications using electronic methods;
- (2) Authorizes a local election authority to develop, maintain, and approve systems that transmit voter registration applications electronically;
- (3) Requires a local election authority that maintains a voter registration application system to direct voter registration applicants from other jurisdictions to the system used by the local election authority for that jurisdiction to accept voter registration applications electronically;
- (4) Requires a system maintained by the Office of the Secretary of State to be used to accept voter registration applications electronically subsequent to approval from the committee that is to be formed;
- (5) Requires the committee to meet not less than semi-annually through June 30, 2019, to recommend and approve changes and enhancements proposed by the Secretary of State or election authorities to the electronic voter registration application system;
- (6) Requires, as soon as practical, the system maintained by the Secretary of State to provide a method where the data entered by

the voter registration applicant does not have to be re-entered by the election authority to the state voter registration database;

(7) Specifies that each applicant who registers using an approved electronic voter registration application system must be deemed to be registered as of the date the signed application is submitted to the system if the application is accepted and not rejected by the election authority and the verification notice required under Section 115.155, RSMo, is not returned as undeliverable by the postal service;

(8) Specifies that these provisions cannot apply to voter registration and absentee records submitted by voters authorized under federal law, Section 115.291, or Sections 115.900 to 115.940, to submit electronic records and signatures;

(9) Requires any signature required for petition submission under Chapter 116 to be handwritten on a paper document. High quality copies, including electronic copies, of signatures made on paper documents may be used for petition signature verification purposes and retained as records; and

(10) Stipulates that an election authority that agrees to conduct a transaction by electronic means may refuse to conduct other transactions by electronic means. These provisions cannot be construed to require the Secretary of State to cease operating a voter registration application in place as of the effective date of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill will decrease paperwork, save money, and allow counting of ballots using the latest technology. St. Louis is already successfully using this system.

Testifying for the bill were Representative McGaugh; Darryl Kempf, Cooper County Clerk; and the Missouri ACLU.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.