

HB 1258 -- PRIMARY ELECTIONS

SPONSOR: Stacy

Beginning January 1, 2021, this bill allows established political parties to use a state funded, closed political primary system conducted by local election authorities. The local election authority will allow registration of voters as members of a particular political party and enforce time limits on registration or changing political parties as specified in the bill. The Secretary of State shall maintain voter registration records and party affiliation and provide such information back to local election authorities as specified in the bill. If the state funded closed primary system is not employed, then political parties may submit candidates chosen by caucus or some other method paid for by the political party for a general election to the requisite election authority.

Persons not previously registered to vote in Missouri may choose a party affiliation and register to vote until the fourth Wednesday prior to a primary election. Independent candidates must be unaffiliated with a political party no later than the 23rd Tuesday before any candidate filing opening date preceding a political primary election in order to run for office. Political party candidates must be affiliated with their party no later than the 23rd week prior to the last Tuesday in February. Any candidates selected by nominating committees must be affiliated with the requisite political party no later than 23 weeks prior to the date of selection.

This bill establishes the "Integrity in Political Party Voting Act." The state shall pay the costs of implementing and providing notice of the closed primary system. Local election authorities shall notify registered voters of the primary election system using current notices mailed to voters and party affiliation changes will be noted beginning January 1, 2021. The voter registration application form will allow an initial choice of party affiliation during the presidential primary, August primary, or general election. Political affiliation or unaffiliation can be changed at any time except if the change occurs within the 23 weeks preceding any political party primary election, at which time the change will not take effect until after the current political party primary held. Deadlines for implementation is January 1, 2025.

The closed primary system applies to the presidential primary as well as other state and federal races (Section 115.628, RSMo).

This bill is similar to HCS HB 26 & 922 (2019).