VETERANS AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Reproduced and distributed under the direction of the Clerk of the House.

STATE OF MAINE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
130TH LEGISLATURE
FIRST SPECIAL SESSION


Amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and inserting the following:

'Sec. 1. 21-A MRSA §161, sub-§2-B is enacted to read:

2-B. Information sharing with other states. The Secretary of State shall contract with a nonprofit corporation of member states for periodic sharing of voter registration information, including information on names and addresses of voters in member states. The Secretary of State shall periodically update the central voter registration system based on the information obtained from the nonprofit corporation of member states.

Sec. 2. 21-A MRSA §752, sub-§3, as repealed and replaced by PL 2001, c. 310, §51, is amended to read:

3. Form of return envelope. The Secretary of State shall design or approve the form of the absentee ballot return envelope. The Secretary of State may not design or approve a return envelope for use in a general election that includes any mark visible on the outside of the return envelope or a space designated for making a mark visible on the outside of the return envelope that indicates the political party of the voter to whom the absentee ballot is issued.

Sec. 3. 21-A MRSA §753-A, sub-§7 is enacted to read:

7. Application for ongoing absentee voter status. A voter who will be at least 65 years of age by the next election or who self-identifies as having a disability may apply for status as an ongoing absentee voter. Each qualified applicant must automatically receive an absentee ballot for each ensuing statewide election, municipal election and any other election for which the voter is entitled to vote and need not submit a separate request for each election.

A. An application for status as an ongoing absentee voter must be made by a voter using procedures designed by the Secretary of State. These procedures must include a
COMMITTEE AMENDMENT “ ” to H.P. 104, L.D. 148

The process for notifying the voter that if the voter moves out of the municipality, that voter's status as an ongoing absentee voter in that municipality terminates. A voter may obtain assistance in completing an application for ongoing absentee voter status pursuant to subsection 5.

B. The clerk or Secretary of State shall terminate a voter's ongoing absentee voter status only upon:

1. The written request of the voter;
2. The death or disqualification of the voter;
3. The cancellation of the voter's registration record in the central voter registration system;
4. The return of an absentee ballot as undeliverable;
5. The failure of the voter to vote by absentee ballot for a general election; or
6. The designation of the voter's status as inactive in the central voter registration system.

This subsection does not apply to uniformed service voters or overseas voters who are covered by the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 52 United States Code, Section 20302 (2019).

Sec. 4. 21-A MRSA §753-A, sub-§8 is enacted to read:

8. Telephone and e-mail contact information. In addition to any required information, a voter applying for an absentee ballot or an ongoing absentee ballot must be asked to provide that voter's telephone number and e-mail address, if available.

Sec. 5. 21-A MRSA §753-B, sub-§1, as amended by PL 2011, c. 399, §22, is further amended to read:

1. Application or written request received Issuance of absentee ballots. Upon receipt of an application or written request for an absentee ballot that is accepted pursuant to section 753-A, and after the official ballots become available, the clerk shall immediately issue an absentee ballot and return envelope by mail or in person to the applicant or to the immediate family member or to a 3rd person designated in a written application or request made by the voter, except as provided in subsection 2. Upon receipt of the official ballots, the clerk shall immediately issue an absentee ballot and return envelope by mail to any voter who has qualified for ongoing absentee voter status under section 753-A, subsection 7. The clerk shall type or write in ink the name and the residence address of the voter in the designated section of the return envelope. The clerk may not make any mark visible on the outside of the return envelope for use in a general election that indicates the political party of the voter to whom an absentee ballot is issued.

Sec. 6. Membership agreement with Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. By January 1, 2023, the Secretary of State shall enter into a membership agreement with the Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. on behalf of the State pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 21-A, section 161, subsection 2-B. The agreement must include terms providing for the periodic sharing of information, including, but not limited to, voter names and addresses, between the Electronic Registration
Information Center, Inc. and the central voter registration system of the Department of the Secretary of State.

Sec. 7. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

SECRETARY OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF
Bureau of Administrative Services and Corporations 0692

Initiative: Provides funding to implement ongoing absentee voting for individuals who will be at least 65 years of age by the next election or have a disability.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>2021-22</th>
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<tr>
<td>General Fund</td>
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<td>All Other</td>
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<td>General Fund Total</td>
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Sec. 8. Effective date. That section of this Act that enacts the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 21-A, section 161, subsection 2-B takes effect January 1, 2023. Those sections of this Act that enact Title 21-A, section 753-A, subsections 7 and 8 and those sections of this Act that amend Title 21-A, section 752, subsection 3 and section 753-B, subsection 1 take effect November 1, 2023.'

Amend the bill by relettering or renumbering any nonconsecutive Part letter or section number to read consecutively.

SUMMARY

This amendment, which is the majority report of the committee, provides that only voters who will be at least 65 years of age before the next election or who self-identify as having a disability are eligible to apply for ongoing absentee voter status. In addition to the reasons for termination set forth in the bill, the amendment provides that a voter's ongoing absentee voter status must be terminated if the voter fails to return an absentee ballot issued to that voter for a general election. The amendment removes the provision of the bill requiring municipal clerks to notify voters within 24 hours when the clerks detect missing or mismatched signatures on an absentee ballot return envelope.

The amendment also clarifies that, as soon as official ballots become available, the municipal clerk must immediately issue absentee ballots and return envelopes to voters with ongoing absentee voter status as well as all other voters who have submitted applications for absentee ballots for a single election that have been accepted by the clerk. The amendment provides that election officials may not make any mark indicating the political party of absentee voters on the outside of the return envelopes issued during a general election.

The amendment further requires the Secretary of State to enter into a membership agreement with the Electronic Registration Information Center, Inc. by January 1, 2023 for periodic sharing of voter registration information with member states and to use that information to periodically update the central voter registration system.
Finally, the amendment delays the effective date of the ongoing absentee voter status provisions of the bill from January 1, 2023 to November 1, 2023, and it also adds an appropriations and allocations section.

FISCAL NOTE REQUIRED
(See attached)