
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 647 (File 434, as amended by Senate "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING VOTING BY MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY SERVING OVERSEAS.

By October 1, 2013, this bill requires the secretary of the state, in consultation with the Military Department, to select a method for members of the armed forces stationed abroad and their family members living with them to return their voted overseas absentee ballots for any election or primary held after September 1, 2014. The method must (1) give due consideration to ballot security and privacy and (2) ensure that the municipality receives the ballot before the polls close, when the voter properly uses the method.

The secretary must submit a report to the Veterans' Affairs and Government Administration and Elections committees by January 1, 2014 describing the method and legislative changes necessary for its implementation.

The bill applies to two types of write-in, overseas absentee ballots: (1) one for elections that is available 90 days before Election Day and (2) one for primaries and elections that is available when the list of candidates and questions to be voted on is set (see BACKGROUND). It covers armed forces members and their family members, not other individuals living or traveling abroad who may vote using the second of these ballots. By law, "members of the armed forces" are active service members of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, Merchant Marines, or Coast and Geodetic Survey (CGS § 9-134).

*Senate Amendment "A" replaces the underlying bill, which required the secretary of the state to develop and report on a method that guaranteed these ballots could be immediately received.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

BACKGROUND

Overseas Absentee Ballots for Armed Forces Members

The first type of overseas absentee ballot is a blank ballot for a regular election that town clerks make available beginning 90 days before the election (i.e., before the candidates are known). It is available to (1) members of the armed forces who are electors, or applicants for admission as electors, and on a contingency operation (i.e., mission) and (2) their family members living abroad with them. Town clerks send the list of candidates as soon as it is available.

The second is a blank ballot for a primary or election that town clerks send, together with the list of candidates and questions to be voted on, as soon as they are available. In addition to the individuals listed above, it is available to (1) electors who are living, or expect to be living or traveling, outside the U.S. on Election Day and (2) any members of the armed forces who are electors or applicants for admission as electors, not only those on a mission, and their family members.

Related Bills

HB 6111, favorably reported by the Government Administration and Elections committee, provides absentee ballots to overseas service members and establishes an electronic ballot tracking system.

SB 283, favorably reported by the Government Administration and Elections committee, authorizes military and overseas voters to return ballots by fax or e-mail and defines a cover sheet to accompany the voted ballot.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Veterans' Affairs Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference
Yea 14 Nay 0 (03/12/2013)

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 14 Nay 0 (03/27/2013)