

HCS SCS SBs 34 & 105 -- MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTING

SPONSOR: Wallingford (Davis)

COMMITTEE ACTIONS: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Elections by a vote of 12 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on State and Local Governments by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill allows a covered voter, as specified in the bill, who has been discharged from military service, has returned from military deployment or activation, or has separated from employment outside of the United States after the voter registration deadline and who is otherwise qualified to register to vote to register to vote in an election in person before the election authority until 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before an election if he or she can show sufficient evidence of qualifying for late registration.

Currently, certain military and overseas voters who are not registered to vote are only permitted to vote in elections for federal offices. The bill allows any covered voter to also vote in elections for statewide offices, state legislative offices, or statewide ballot initiatives by submitting a federal postcard application at the polling place even though the person is not registered. A federal postcard application must also serve as a voter registration application and the election authority must, if satisfied that the applicant is entitled to register, place the voter's name on the voter registration file.

An application for a military-overseas ballot must be deemed timely if it is received by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday, instead of by 5:00 p.m. on the Wednesday, prior to the election.

The bill also allows participants in the Address Confidentiality Program established under Sections 589.660 to 589.681, RSMo, to vote by absentee ballot if they have safety concerns about voting in person on election day.

The bill contains an emergency clause.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill will help military personnel and other citizens register to vote in a timely manner and allow them to vote in state as well as federal elections.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Wallingford; Wendy Noren, Boone County Clerk; and Elizabeth Zerr, Office of the Secretary of State.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.