

HB 501 -- ELECTIONS

SPONSOR: Newman

Beginning January 1, 2018, this bill allows any registered voter to cast an advance ballot starting on the third Wednesday before any election. Any registered voter may vote by advance ballot at the central voting location designated by the election authority. Voting will be allowed during regular business hours on weekdays and on Saturdays until 12:00 p.m. until the close of regular business hours on the Wednesday before the election. Regular business hours must not begin earlier than 7:00 a.m. nor extend beyond 7:00 p.m.

For all federal elections and all other elections as the election authority designates, up to six satellite voting sites must be provided by the election authority with one satellite site established for every 50,000 registered voters in that jurisdiction. For other elections, the use of satellite sites is discretionary. An election authority must provide adequate public notice of the central voting location as specified in the bill. The election authority must appoint at least one judge from each major political party to serve at each satellite site. A major political party cannot have a majority of the judges at a satellite site and an established party cannot have a great number of judges at any satellite than any major political party.

The election judge cannot allow any person who has voted an advance ballot in the election to vote at the polls on election day. If it is determined that a voter submitted an advance ballot and voted at the polls, he or she, having voted more than once, is guilty of a class one election offense.

All costs associated with the implementation of advance voting as authorized by these provisions must be reimbursed from the state's general revenue.

Any person who knowingly discloses specified confidential information will be guilty of a class four election offense. A person voting by advance ballot must receive the same confidentially protections as a person voting by absentee ballot.

The bill increases, from within 25 to within 100 feet of the building's outer door closest to the polling place, the prohibition of exit polling, surveying, sampling, electioneering, distributing election literature, posting signs, or placing vehicles bearing signs regarding any candidate or ballot question on an election day.

Certain provisions requiring the election authority to record information regarding advance and absentee ballots in St. Louis City and Kansas City and the counties of Jackson and St. Louis are repealed requiring all election authorities to record the information.

This bill requires the Secretary of State to conduct automatic voter registration by use of information provided by the Department of Revenue regarding driver's licenses and address changes. Local election authorities will retain authority to verify voter eligibility and use existing procedures to place and remove voter names from the list of eligible voters. The bill has time limits for notification of eligible voters and an "opt out" provision allowing eligible voters to decline registration. The bill is subject to appropriations funding by the General Assembly in order to pay any administrative costs and is otherwise void. The bill does not inhibit existing methods for voluntary voter registration or voting.

The bill also requires the Secretary of State and the Department of Revenue to implement a voter pre-registration program for those ages 15 to 18. These individuals may opt out of this program, but will otherwise be registered to vote at the appropriate age using the method of the automatic voter registration process for adults. This program is also subject to appropriation.

This bill is similar to HB 2280 and 2281 (2016).