

HOUSE BILL NO. 439

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Privileges and Elections

on _____)

(Patron Prior to Substitute--Delegate VanValkenburg)

A BILL to amend and reenact § 24.2-706 of the Code of Virginia, relating to absentee ballots; materials included; information on proposed constitutional amendments and referenda.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 24.2-706 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 24.2-706. Duty of general registrar on receipt of application; statement of voter.

A. On receipt of an application for an absentee ballot, the general registrar shall enroll the name and address of each registered applicant on an absentee voter applicant list that shall be maintained in the office of the general registrar with a file of the applications received. The list shall be available for inspection and copying and the applications shall be available for inspection only by any registered voter during regular office hours. Upon request and for a reasonable fee, the Department of Elections shall provide an electronic copy of the absentee voter applicant list to any political party or candidate. Such list shall be used only for campaign and political purposes. Any list made available for inspection and copying under this section shall contain the post office box address in lieu of the residence street address for any individual who has furnished at the time of registration or subsequently, in addition to his street address, a post office box address pursuant to subsection B of § 24.2-418.

No list or application containing an individual's social security number, or any part thereof, or the individual's day and month of birth, shall be made available for inspection or copying by anyone. The Department of Elections shall prescribe procedures for general registrars to make the information in the lists and applications available in a manner that does not reveal social security numbers or parts thereof, or an individual's day and month of birth.

26 B. The completion and timely delivery of an application for an absentee ballot shall be construed
27 to be an offer by the applicant to vote in the election.

28 The general registrar shall note on each application received whether the applicant is or is not a
29 registered voter. In reviewing the application for an absentee ballot, the general registrar shall not reject
30 the application of any individual because of an error or omission on any record or paper relating to the
31 application, if such error or omission is not material in determining whether such individual is qualified
32 to vote absentee.

33 C. If the application has been properly completed and signed and the applicant is a registered voter
34 of the precinct in which he offers to vote, the general registrar shall, at the time when the printed ballots
35 for the election are available, send by the deadline set out in § 24.2-612, obtaining a certificate or other
36 evidence of either first-class or expedited mailing or delivery from the United States Postal Service or
37 other commercial delivery provider, or deliver to him in person in the office of the registrar, the following
38 items and nothing else:

39 1. An envelope containing the folded ballot, sealed and marked "Ballot within. Do not open except
40 in presence of a witness."

41 2. An envelope for resealing the marked ballot, on which envelope is printed the following:
42 "Statement of Voter."

43 "I do hereby state, subject to felony penalties for making false statements pursuant to § 24.2-1016,
44 that my FULL NAME is _____ (last, first, middle); that I am now or have been at some time since last
45 November's general election a legal resident of _____ (STATE YOUR LEGAL RESIDENCE IN
46 VIRGINIA including the house number, street name or rural route address, city, zip code); that I received
47 the enclosed ballot(s) upon application to the registrar of such county or city; that I opened the envelope
48 marked 'ballot within' and marked the ballot(s) in the presence of the witness, without assistance or
49 knowledge on the part of anyone as to the manner in which I marked it (or I am returning the form required
50 to report how I was assisted); that I then sealed the ballot(s) in this envelope; and that I have not voted and
51 will not vote in this election at any other time or place.

52 Signature of Voter _____

53 Date _____

54 Signature of witness _____ "

55 For elections held after January 1, 2004, instead of the envelope containing the above oath, an
56 envelope containing the standard oath prescribed by the presidential designee under § 101(b)(7) of the
57 Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (52 U.S.C. § 20301 et seq.) shall be sent to voters
58 who are qualified to vote absentee under that Act.

59 When this statement has been properly completed and signed by the registered voter and witnessed,
60 his ballot shall not be subject to challenge pursuant to § 24.2-651.

61 3. An envelope, properly addressed and postage prepaid, for the return of the ballot to the general
62 registrar by mail or by the applicant in person, or to a drop-off location.

63 4. Printed instructions for completing the ballot and statement on the envelope and returning the
64 ballot. Such instructions shall include information on the sites of all drop-off locations in the county or
65 city. Whenever there is a proposed constitutional amendment or a statewide referendum to be voted on by
66 the voters, these instructions shall also include the website address where the explanation of the proposed
67 amendment prepared pursuant to § 30-19.9 or the information about the referendum prepared pursuant to
68 § 30-19.10 is posted on the Department's website.

69 For federal elections held after January 1, 2004, for any voter who is required by subparagraph (b)
70 of 52 U.S.C. § 21083 of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to show identification the first time the voter
71 votes in a federal election in the state, the printed instructions shall direct the voter to submit with his
72 ballot (i) a copy of a current and valid photo identification or (ii) a copy of a current utility bill, bank
73 statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows the name and address
74 of the voter. Such individual who desires to vote by mail but who does not submit one of the forms of
75 identification specified in this paragraph may cast such ballot by mail and the ballot shall be counted as a
76 provisional ballot under the provisions of § 24.2-653.01. The Department of Elections shall provide
77 instructions to the electoral boards for the handling and counting of such provisional ballots pursuant to §
78 24.2-653.01 and this section.

79 5. For any voter entitled to vote absentee under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee
80 Voting Act (52 U.S.C. § 20301 et seq.), information provided by the Department of Elections specific to
81 the voting rights and responsibilities for such citizens, or information provided by the registrar specific to
82 the status of the voter registration and absentee ballot application of such voter, may be included.

83 The envelopes and instructions shall be in the form prescribed by the Department of Elections.

84 D. The general registrar may contract with a third party for the printing, assembly, and mailing of
85 the items set forth in subsection C. The general registrar shall provide to the contractor in a timely manner
86 the names, addresses, precincts, and ballot styles of voters requesting an absentee ballot by mail. The
87 vendor shall provide to the general registrar a report of the voters to whom the absentee ballot materials
88 have been sent.

89 E. If the applicant completes his application in person under § 24.2-701 at a time when the printed
90 ballots for the election are available, he may request that the general registrar send to him by mail the
91 items set forth in subdivisions C 1 through 4, instead of casting the ballot in person. Such request shall be
92 made no later than 5:00 p.m. on the eleventh day prior to the election in which the applicant offers to vote,
93 and the general registrar shall send those items to the applicant by mail, obtaining a certificate or other
94 evidence of mailing.

95 F. If the applicant is a covered voter, as defined in § 24.2-452, the general registrar, at the time
96 when the printed ballots for the election are available, shall mail by the deadline set forth in § 24.2-612 or
97 deliver in person to the applicant in the office of the general registrar the items as set forth in subdivisions
98 C 1 through 4 and, if necessary, an application for registration. A certificate or other evidence of mailing
99 shall not be required. If the applicant requests that such items be sent by electronic transmission, the
100 general registrar, at the time when the printed ballots for the election are available but not later than the
101 deadline set forth in § 24.2-612, shall send by electronic transmission the blank ballot, the form for the
102 envelope for returning the marked ballot, and instructions to the voter. Such materials shall be sent using
103 the official email address or fax number of the office of the general registrar published on the Department
104 of Elections website. The State Board of Elections may prescribe by regulation the format of the email
105 address used for transmitting ballots to eligible voters. A general registrar may also use electronic

106 transmission facilities provided by the Federal Voting Assistance Program. The voted ballot shall be
107 returned to the general registrar as otherwise required by this chapter.

108 G. The circuit courts shall have jurisdiction to issue an injunction to enforce the provisions of this
109 section upon the application of (i) any aggrieved voter, (ii) any candidate in an election district in whole
110 or in part in the court's jurisdiction where a violation of this section has occurred, or is likely to occur, or
111 (iii) the campaign committee or the appropriate district political party chairman of such candidate. Any
112 person who fails to discharge his duty as provided in this section through willful neglect of duty and with
113 malicious intent shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor as provided in subsection A of § 24.2-1001.

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