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Indicates New Matter

AS PASSED BY THE SENATE

January 23, 2013

**S. 2**

Introduced by Senators Campsen, L. Martin, Cromer, Hayes and Grooms

S. Printed 1/23/13--S. [SEC 1/24/13 9:35 AM]

Read the first time January 8, 2013.

**A** **BILL**

TO ESTABLISH THE “EQUAL ACCESS TO THE BALLOT ACT”, BY AMENDING SECTION 8‑13‑1356, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE FILING OF A STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS BY A CANDIDATE, TO PROVIDE THAT A CANDIDATE WHO IS NOT A PUBLIC OFFICIAL AND A CANDIDATE WHO IS A PUBLIC OFFICIAL SHALL ELECTRONICALLY FILE OR UPDATE A STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS, AS APPLICABLE, PRIOR TO FILING A STATEMENT OF INTENTION OF CANDIDACY OR NOMINATION FOR PETITION; TO AMEND SECTION 7‑11‑15, TO PROVIDE THAT THE FILING PERIOD RUNS FROM MARCH TWENTY‑THIRD TO MARCH THIRTIETH, TO REQUIRE THAT THE PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOT ACCEPT A STATEMENT OF INTENTION OF CANDIDACY UNLESS THE COMMITTEE VERIFIES THAT THE CANDIDATE FILED AN ELECTRONIC STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTEREST, AND TO PROVIDE THAT INTENTIONS OF CANDIDACY ARE TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATE ELECTION COMMISSION BY NOON ON THE FIFTH DAY AFTER THE FILING DEADLINE.

Amend Title To Conform

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 7-11-15 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7-11-15. (A) In order to qualify as a candidate to run in the general election, all candidates seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention must file a statement of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees between noon on March sixteenth and noon on March thirtieth as provided in this section.

(1) ~~Candidates~~ Except as otherwise provided in this section, candidates seeking nomination for a statewide, congressional, or district office that includes more than one county must file their statements of intention of candidacy, and party pledge and submit any filing fees with the ~~state executive committee of their respective party~~ State Election Commission.

(2) Candidates seeking nomination for the State Senate or House of Representatives must file their statements of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees with the county ~~executive committee of their respective party~~ election commission in the county of their residence. ~~The county committees must, within five days of the receipt of the statements, transmit the statements along with the applicable filing fees to the respective state executive committees. However, the county committees must report all filings to the state committees no later than five p.m. on March thirtieth.~~ The state executive committees must certify candidates pursuant to Section 7‑13‑40.

(3) Candidates seeking nomination for a countywide or less than countywide office shall file their statements of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees with the county ~~executive committee of their respective party~~ election commission in the county of their residence.

(B) Except as provided herein, the ~~county executive committee of any political party~~ election commission with whom ~~statements of intention of candidacy~~ the documents in subsection (A) are filed must ~~file, in turn,~~ provide a copy of all statements of intention of candidacy, the party pledge, receipt ~~with the county election commission by noon on the tenth~~ and filing fees, to the appropriate political party executive committee within two days following the deadline for filing ~~statements by candidates~~. If the ~~tenth~~ second day falls on Saturday, Sunday, or a legal holiday, the ~~statements~~ statement of intention of candidacy, party pledge, and filing fee must be filed by noon the following day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. ~~The state executive committee of any political party with whom statements of intention of candidacy are filed must file, in turn, all the statements of intention of candidacy with the State Election Commission by noon on the tenth day following the deadline for filing statements by candidates. If the tenth day falls on Saturday, Sunday, or a legal holiday, the statements must be filed by noon the following day.~~ No candidate's name may appear on a primary election ballot, convention slate of candidates, general election ballot, or special election ballot, except as otherwise provided by law, if (1) the candidate's statement of intention of candidacy and party pledge has not been filed with the County Election Commission or State Election Commission, as the case may be, as well as any filing fee, by the deadline and (2) the candidate has not been certified by the appropriate political party as required by Sections 7‑13‑40 and 7‑13‑350, as applicable. The candidate's name must appear if the candidate produces the signed and dated copy of his timely filed statement of intention of candidacy. An error or omission by a person seeking to qualify as a candidate pursuant to this section that is not directly related to a constitutional or statutory qualification for that office must be construed in a manner that favors the person's access to the ballot.

(C) The statement of intention of candidacy required in this section and in Section 7‑13‑190(B) must be on a form designed and provided by the State Election Commission. This form, in addition to all other information, must contain an affirmation that the candidate meets, or will meet by the time of the general election, or as otherwise required by law, the qualifications for the office sought. ~~It must be filed in triplicate by the candidate~~ The candidate must file three signed copies and the ~~political party committee~~ election commission with whom it is filed must stamp ~~it~~ each copy with the date and time received, ~~sign it,~~ keep one copy, return one copy to the candidate, and send one copy to ~~either the county election commission or the State Election Commission, as the case may be~~ the appropriate political party executive committee.

(D) The candidate must file three signed copies of the party pledge, as required pursuant to Section 7-11-210, and the election commission with whom it is filed must stamp each copy with the date and time received, return one copy to the candidate, and send one copy to the appropriate political party executive committee.

(E) The candidate must sign a receipt for the filing fee, and the election commission with whom it is filed must stamp the receipt with the date and time the filing fee was received, provide one copy to the candidate and provide one copy to the appropriate political executive party. The filing fee must be made payable to the appropriate political party.

(F) If, after the closing of the time for filing ~~statements of intention of candidacy~~ the documents required pursuant to this Section, there are not more than two candidates for any one office and one or more of the candidates dies, or withdraws, the state or county committee, as the case may be, if the nomination is by political party primary or political party convention only may, in its discretion, afford opportunity for the entry of other candidates for the office involved; however, for the office of State House of Representatives or State Senator, the discretion must be exercised by the state committee.

(G) The county chairman of a political party and the chairman of the state executive committee of a political party may designate a person to observe the filings made at the election commission pursuant to this section.

(H) The provisions of this section do not apply to nonpartisan school trustee elections in any school district where local law provisions provide for other dates and procedures for filing statements of candidacy or petitions, and to the extent the provisions of this section and the local law provisions conflict, the local law provisions control.”

SECTION 2. Section 7-11-55 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

Section 7‑11‑55. If a party nominee dies, becomes disqualified after his nomination, or resigns his candidacy for a legitimate nonpolitical reason as defined in Section 7‑11‑50 and was selected through a party primary election, the vacancy must be filled in a special primary election to be conducted as provided in this section. The filing period for this special primary election opens the second Tuesday after the death, disqualification, or approval of the resignation for one week. The special primary election then must be conducted on the second Tuesday immediately following the close of the filing period. A runoff, if necessary, must be held two weeks after the first primary. The nomination must be certified not less than two weeks before the date of the general election. If the nomination is certified two weeks or more before the date of the general election, that office is to be filled at the general election.

If the nomination is certified less than two weeks before the date of the general election, that office must not be filled at the general election but must be filled in a special election to be held on the second Tuesday in the month following the election, provided that the date of the special election to be conducted after the general election may be combined with other necessary elections scheduled to occur within a twenty‑eight day period in the manner authorized by Section 7‑13‑190(D).

The procedures for resigning a candidacy under this section for legitimate nonpolitical reasons are the same as provided in Section 7‑11‑50.

In order to qualify as a candidate, the person must file his statement of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees in the manner provided in Section 7-11-15. A candidate must also file his statement of economic interests electronically with the State Ethics Commission pursuant to Section 8-13-1356(A).

Where the party nominee was unopposed, each political party registered with the State Election Commission has the privilege of nominating a candidate for the office involved through a special primary election in the same manner and under the same procedures stipulated by this section.”

SECTION 3. Section 7-13-40 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7-13-40. In the event that a party nominates candidates by party primary, a party primary must be held by the party and conducted by the State Election Commission and the respective county election commissions on the second Tuesday in June of each general election year, and a second and third primary each two weeks successively thereafter, if necessary. Written certification of the names of all candidates to be placed on primary ballots must be made by the political party chairman, vice chairman, or secretary to the State Election Commission or the county election commission, whichever is responsible under law for preparing the ballot, not later than twelve o'clock noon on April ninth, or if April ninth falls on a Saturday or Sunday, not later than twelve o'clock noon on the following Monday. Political parties nominating candidates by party primary must verify the qualifications of those candidates prior to certification to the appropriate election commission of the names of candidates to be placed on primary ballots. The written verification required by this section must contain a statement that each candidate certified meets, or will meet by the time of the general election, or as otherwise required by law, the qualifications for office for which he has filed. ~~Political parties must not accept the filing of~~ A political party must not certify any candidate who does not or will not by the time of the general election, or as otherwise required by law, meet the qualifications for the office for which the candidate ~~desires to file~~ has filed, and such candidate's name shall not be placed on a primary ballot. The filing fees for all candidates filing to run in all primaries, except municipal primaries, must be transmitted by the respective political parties to the State Election Commission and placed by the executive director of the commission in a special account designated for use in conducting primary elections and must be used for that purpose. The filing fee for each office is one percent of the total salary for the term of that office or one hundred dollars, whichever amount is greater."

SECTION 4. Section 7-13-45 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7‑13‑45. (A) In every general election year, the ~~county chairman~~ executive director of the State Election Commission and the director of each county election commission shall:

~~(1)~~ ~~designate a specified place other than a private residence where~~ ~~persons may file a statement of intention of candidacy;~~

~~(2)~~ ~~designate a specified place other than a private residence where persons may file as candidates;~~

~~(3)~~(1) establish regular hours of not less than four hours a day during the final seventy‑two hours of the filing period in which ~~he~~ the director or some person he designates must be present ~~at the designated place~~ to accept filings as required by Section 7-11-15;

~~(4)~~(2) place an advertisement to appear two weeks before the filing period begins in a newspaper of general circulation in the county at least five by seven inches in size that notifies the public of the dates of the filing periods, the offices which may be filed for, the place and street address where filings may be made, and the hours that an authorized person will be present to receive filings.”

SECTION 5. Section 8‑13‑365 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8-13-365. ~~(A)~~ The commission shall establish a system of electronic filing for all disclosures and reports required pursuant to Chapter 13, Title 8, and Chapter 17, Title 2 ~~from all persons and entities subject to its jurisdiction~~ except for forms and reports required pursuant to Article 9, Chapter 13, Title 8. These disclosures and reports must be filed using an Internet‑based filing system as prescribed by the commission. ~~Reports and disclosures filed with the Ethics Committees of the Senate and House of Representatives for legislative offices must be in a format such that these filings can be forwarded to the State Ethics Commission using an Internet‑based system~~. The information contained in the reports and disclosure forms, with the exception of social security numbers, campaign bank account numbers, and tax ID numbers, must be publicly accessible, searchable, and transferable.

~~(B)~~ ~~The Ethics Commission must submit to the General Assembly a report no later than one year after implementation of subsection (A), concerning the effectiveness of mandatory electronic filing, and must make recommendations as to the implementation of mandatory filing for all other candidates and entities.~~”

SECTION 6. Section 8‑13‑1140 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1140. A person required to file a statement of economic interests under this chapter shall annually file, pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365, an updated statement for the previous calendar year ~~with the appropriate supervisory office~~ ~~annually~~, no later than ~~April fifteenth~~ noon on March thirtieth of each calendar year~~, listing any addition, deletion, or change in his economic status with respect to which information is required to be supplied under this article~~. If the person has filed the description by name, amount, and schedule of payments of a continuing arrangement relating to an item required to be reported under this article, an updating statement need not be filed for each payment under the continuing arrangement, but only if the arrangement is terminated or altered.”

SECTION 7. Section 7-11-210 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7‑11‑210. Every candidate for selection as a nominee of any political party for any state office, United States Senator, member of Congress, or solicitor, to be voted for in any party primary election or political party convention, shall file with and place in the possession of the ~~treasurer of the state committee~~ appropriate election commission, pursuant to Section 7-11-15 by twelve o’clock noon on March thirtieth a ~~notice or~~ party pledge in the following form, the blanks being properly filled in and the ~~notice or~~ party pledge signed by the candidate: ‘I hereby file my notice as a candidate for the nomination as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the primary election or convention to be held on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I affiliate with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Party, and I hereby pledge myself to abide by the results of the primary or convention. I shall not authorize my name to be placed on the general election ballot by petition and will not offer or campaign as a write‑in candidate for this office or any other office for which the party has a nominee. I authorize the issuance of an injunction upon ex parte application by the party chairman, as provided by law, should I violate this pledge by offering or campaigning in the ensuing general election for election to this office or any other office for which a nominee has been elected in the party primary election, unless the nominee for the office has become deceased or otherwise disqualified for election in the ensuing general election. I hereby affirm that I meet, or will meet by the time of the general or special election, or as otherwise required by law, the qualifications for this office’.

Every candidate for selection in a primary election as the nominee of any political party for member of the Senate, member of the House of Representatives, and all county and township offices shall file with and place in the possession of the county ~~chairman~~ election commission of the county in which they reside ~~or other officer as may be named by the county committee of the county in which they reside~~ by twelve o’clock noon on March thirtieth a like ~~notice and~~ party pledge.

The ~~notice of candidacy~~ party pledge required by this section to be filed by a candidate in a primary must be signed personally by the candidate, and the signature of the candidate must be signed in the presence of ~~the county chairman~~ ~~or other officer as may be named by the county committee with whom the candidate is filing, or a candidate must have his signature on the notice of the candidacy acknowledged and certified by any officer authorized to administer an oath~~ an individual authorized by the election commission director. Any ~~notice of candidacy~~ party pledge of any candidate signed by an agent in behalf of a candidate shall not be valid.

In the event that a person who was defeated as a candidate for nomination to an office in a party’s primary election shall thereafter offer or campaign as a candidate against any nominee for election to any office in the ensuing general election, the state chairman of the party which held the primary (if the office involved is one voted for in the general election by the electors of more than one county), or the county chairman of the party which held the primary (in the case of all other offices), shall forthwith institute an action in a court of competent jurisdiction for an order enjoining the person from so offering or campaigning in the general election, and the court is hereby empowered upon proof of these facts to issue an order.”

SECTION 8. Section 7-11-220 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7‑11‑220. Every candidate for selection in a primary election as the nominee of a political party for the office of State Senator shall file with ~~and place in the possession of the county chairman~~ the election commission of the county in which he resides~~, or such other officer as may be named by the county committee of the county in which he resides,~~ at the same time as those wishing to offer for nomination in such primary for countywide or less than countywide office, a ~~notice or~~ party pledge as required by Section 7‑11‑210.”

SECTION 9. Section 8‑13‑1356 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 8‑13‑1356. (A) ~~This section does not apply to a public official who has a current disclosure statement on file with the appropriate supervisory office pursuant to Sections 8‑13‑1110 or 8‑13‑1140.~~

~~(B)~~ A person who becomes a candidate by filing a statement of intention of candidacy seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention must electronically file a statement of economic interests for the preceding calendar year ~~at the same time and with the same official with whom the candidate files~~ pursuant to Section 8‑13‑365 prior to the close of filing for the particular office ~~a~~ ~~declaration of candidacy~~ ~~or petition for nomination~~.

(B) A person who becomes a candidate by filing a petition for nomination must electronically file a statement of economic interests for the preceding calendar year pursuant to Section 8-13-365 within fifteen days of submitting the petition pursuant to Section 7-11-70 or 7-11-71.

(C) A person who becomes a write-in candidate must electronically file a statement of economic interests for the preceding calendar year within twenty-four hours of filing an initial campaign finance report pursuant to Section 8-13-1308(A) or before taking the oath of office, whichever occurs earlier.

~~(C)~~ ~~The official with whom the candidate files a declaration of candidacy or petition for nomination, no later than five business days after candidacy books close, must file a copy of the statement with the appropriate supervisory office.~~

~~(D)~~ ~~An individual who becomes a candidate other than by filing must, no later than fifteen business days after becoming a candidate, file a statement of economic interests for the preceding calendar year with the appropriate supervisory office~~.

~~(E)~~ ~~An officer authorized to receive declarations of candidacy and petitions for nominations under the provisions of Chapter 11 of Title 7 may not accept a declaration of candidacy or petition for nomination unless the declaration or petition is accompanied by a statement of economic interests. If the candidate’s name inadvertently appears on the ballot, the officer authorized to receive declarations of candidacy or petitions for nomination must not certify the candidate subsequent to the election.~~

~~(F)~~ ~~If the candidate files for office before January first of the year in which the election is held, he must file a supplementary statement covering the preceding calendar year no later than April first of the year in which the election is held.~~

~~(G)~~(D) A candidate who is not a public official otherwise filing a statement has the same disclosure requirements as a public official with the exception of reporting gifts.

~~(H)~~ ~~The State Ethics Commission must furnish to each clerk of court in the State forms on which the statement of economic interests shall be filed.~~

(E) All candidates seeking office must file statement of economic interests pursuant to Section 8-13-365 prior to the date of the election.

(F) The appropriate supervisory office shall assess a civil penalty pursuant to Section 8-13-1510 against a candidate who fails to timely file a statement of economic interests as required by this section.

(G) No candidate shall take the oath of office or enter upon his official responsibilities unless he has complied with the provisions of this section.”

SECTION 10. In order to educate various parties regarding the provisions contained in this act, the following notifications must be made:

(1) The State Election Commission must notify each county election commission of the provisions of this act.

(2) The State Election Commission must post the provisions of this act on its website.

(3) Each state party executive committee must notify their respective county executive parties of the provisions of this act.

SECTION 11. The General Assembly finds that all the provisions contained in this act relate to one subject as required by Section 17, Article III of the South Carolina Constitution in that each provision relates directly to or in conjunction with other sections to the subject of election reform as stated in the title. The General Assembly further finds that a common purpose or relationship exists among the sections, representing a potential plurality but not disunity of topics, notwithstanding that reasonable minds might differ in identifying more than one topic contained in this act.

SECTION 12. The provisions of this act are severable. If any section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, item, subitem, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this act is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such holding shall not affect the constitutionality or validity of the remaining portions of the act, the General Assembly hereby declaring that it would have passed each and every section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, item, subitem, sentence, clause, phrase, and word thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more other sections, subsections, paragraphs, subparagraphs, items, subitems, sentences, clauses, phrases, or words hereof may be declared to be unconstitutional, invalid, or otherwise ineffective.

SECTION 13. This act takes effect upon preclearance approval by the United States Department of Justice or approval by a declaratory judgment issued by the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, whichever occurs first.

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