~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~

Indicates New Matter

AS PASSED BY THE SENATE

April 29, 2014

**H. 3198**

Introduced by Reps. J.E. Smith, M.S. McLeod, Bernstein, Ballentine and Finlay

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Read the first time April 15, 2014.

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 7‑27‑115 SO AS TO PLACE THE DIRECTORS OF THE COUNTY BOARDS OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS UNDER THE GENERAL SUPERVISION OF THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION, TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION TO ESTABLISH BY REGULATION THE MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR A PERSON TO SERVE AS THE DIRECTOR OF A COUNTY BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS, TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION TO ESTABLISH MANDATORY TRAINING CERTIFICATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DIRECTORS OF THE COUNTY BOARDS OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS, AND TO REQUIRE COUNTY BOARDS OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS TO MEET AT LEAST FOUR TIMES EACH CALENDAR YEAR; TO AMEND SECTION 7‑27‑110, RELATING TO THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT ALL COUNTIES MUST HAVE A SINGLE BOARD OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS; TO AMEND SECTION 7‑27‑260, RELATING TO THE CHEROKEE COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION AND THE CHEROKEE COUNTY BOARD OF REGISTRATION, SO AS TO COMBINE THE BODIES INTO A SINGLE ENTITY; TO AMEND SECTION 7‑27‑290, RELATING TO THE DILLON COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION AND THE DILLON COUNTY BOARD OF REGISTRATION, SO AS TO COMBINE THE BODIES INTO A SINGLE ENTITY; TO AMEND SECTION 7‑27‑320, RELATING TO THE GREENVILLE COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION AND THE GREENVILLE COUNTY BOARD OF REGISTRATION, SO AS TO COMBINE THE BODIES INTO A SINGLE ENTITY; TO AMEND SECTION 7‑27‑325, RELATING TO THE GREENWOOD COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION AND THE GREENWOOD COUNTY BOARD OF REGISTRATION, SO AS TO COMBINE THE BODIES INTO A SINGLE ENTITY; TO AMEND SECTION 7‑27‑335, RELATING TO THE HORRY COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION AND THE HORRY COUNTY BOARD OF REGISTRATION, SO AS TO COMBINE THE BODIES INTO A SINGLE ENTITY; TO AMEND SECTION 7‑27‑415, RELATING TO THE SPARTANBURG COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION AND THE SPARTANBURG COUNTY BOARD OF REGISTRATION, SO AS TO COMBINE THE BODIES INTO A SINGLE ENTITY; AND TO AMEND SECTION 7‑27‑430, RELATING TO THE WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION AND THE WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY BOARD OF REGISTRATION, SO AS TO COMBINE THE BODIES INTO A SINGLE ENTITY.

Amend Title To Conform

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

SECTION 1. Section 7-5-10 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7-5-10. (A)(1) ~~Between the first day of January and the fifteenth day of March in each even-numbered year the~~ The Governor shall appoint, ~~by and with the advice and consent of the Senate~~ upon the recommendation of the legislative delegation of the counties, ~~not less than three nor more than five~~ competent and discreet persons in each county, who are qualified electors of that county and who must be known as the ‘Board of Voter Registration and Elections of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ County’. The total number of members on the board must be not less than five nor more than nine persons. At least one appointee on the board shall be a member of the majority political party represented in the General Assembly and at least one appointee shall be a member of the largest minority political party represented in the General Assembly.

(2) After their appointment, the board members must take and subscribe, before any officer authorized to administer oaths, the following oath of office prescribed by Section 26 of Article III of the Constitution: ‘I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I am duly qualified, according to the Constitution of this State, to exercise the duties of the office to which I have been appointed, and that I will, to the best of my ability, discharge the duties thereof, and preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of this State and of the United States. So help me God.’

(3) The oath must be filed immediately in the office of the clerk of court of common pleas of the county in which the commissioners are appointed, or if there is no clerk of court, in the office of the Secretary of State.

(4) The Governor shall notify the State Election Commission in writing of the appointments. The members appointed are subject to removal by the Governor for incapacity, misconduct, or neglect of duty.

(B)(1) The Governor shall appoint the initial appointees within six months of the effective date of this section. Four of the initial appointees shall serve two-year terms, and the remaining initial appointees shall serve four-year terms. Upon expiration of the terms of those members initially appointed, the term of office for the members of the board is four years, and until their successors are appointed and qualify. Members may succeed themselves.

(2) A member must be present at a meeting in order to vote. (3) If a member misses three consecutive meetings of the board, the chairman or his designee shall immediately notify the Governor who shall then remove the member from office.

(4) In case of a vacancy on the board, the vacancy must be filled in the same manner as an original appointment, as provided in this section, for the unexpired term.

(5) The board shall elect from among its members a chairman and such other officers as it may consider desirable. The board shall then notify the State Election Commission in writing of the name of the persons elected as chairman and officers of the board. Each officer shall be elected for a term of two years.

(6) The board must hire a director. The director is responsible for hiring and managing the staff. Staff positions are subject to the personnel system policies and procedures by which all county employees are regulated, except that the director serves at the pleasure of the board. A member of the board must not be hired or serve as a member of the staff while serving as a board member.

(7) Members of the board and its staff shall receive compensation as may be appropriated by the governing body of the county.

(C) The previous offices of county election commissions, voter registration boards, or combined boards are abolished. The powers and duties of the county election commissions, voter registration boards, or combined boards are devolved upon the Board of Voter Registration and Elections for each county created in subsection (A). Those members currently serving on the county election commissions, voter registration boards, or combined boards shall continue to serve in a combined governing capacity until at least five members of the successor board members established under this section are appointed and qualify.

~~(B)~~(D)(1) Each member, and each staff person designated by the board, must complete, within eighteen months after a member’s initial appointment or his reappointment following a break in service, or within eighteen months after a staff person’s initial employment or reemployment following a break in service, a training and certification program conducted by the State Election Commission. When a member or staff person has successfully completed the training and certification program, the State Election Commission must issue the member or staff person a certification, whether or not the member or staff person applies for the certification.

~~(2)(a)~~ ~~The provisions of this section do not exempt any member or staff person from completing the training and certification program required in item (1).~~

~~(b)~~ ~~Any member appointed or reappointed after a break in service prior to the effective date of this section or any staff person employed or reemployed after a break in service prior to the effective date of this section must successfully complete a training and certification program by the latter of:~~

~~(i)~~  ~~eighteen months after the member’s appointment or reappointment after a break in service or the staff person’s employment or reemployment after a break in service; or~~

~~(ii)~~ ~~ninety days after the effective date of this section.~~

~~(c)~~ ~~On and after the effective date of this section, any member appointed or reappointed after a break in service or any staff person employed or reemployed after a break in service must complete the training and certification program required in item (1) within eighteen months after the member’s appointment or reappointment after a break in service or staff person’s employment or reemployment after a break in service.~~

~~(3)~~(2) If a member does not fulfill the training and certification program as provided in this section, the Governor, upon notification, must remove that member from the board unless the Governor grants the member an extension to complete the training and certification program based upon exceptional circumstances.

~~(4)~~(3) Following completion of the training and certification program required in item (1), each board member, and each staff person designated by the board or commission, must take at least one training course each year.”

SECTION 2. Section 7-5-20 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7-5-20. The board of voter registration and elections of each county may appoint deputy members of the board, in numbers as may be necessary, whose terms shall be for a period of time as determined by the boards. The deputy members shall have the same powers and duties as regular members of the board. The clerk to each board may be made a deputy member of the board for the purpose of taking applications.”

SECTION 3. Section 7-5-30 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 7-5-30. Such boards shall register and conduct the registration of the electors who shall apply for registration in their respective counties as herein required. Their office shall be at the county seat, and they shall keep a record of all their official acts and proceedings. Provided, that nothing herein shall be construed as prohibiting the boards of registration from taking their registration books across adjoining county lines to register qualified electors of their respective county whose regular place of employment is in an adjoining county or who are otherwise unable to get to the county seat during office hours to register. One member of the board shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of registering or refusing to register applications for registration. ~~Their term of office shall be for two years from the date of their appointment, and they shall continue in office until their successors shall have been appointed and shall qualify. In case of a vacancy from any cause in any board of registration the Governor shall fill such vacancy in the same manner as provided in Section 7‑5‑10.~~”

SECTION 4. Section 7-5-35 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

SECTION 5. Section 7-13-70 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

SECTION 6. Chapter 27, Title 7 of the 1976 Code is repealed.

SECTION 7. The code commissioner is directed to change all references in Title 7 to county election commissions or commissioners or county boards of voter registration to the “Board of Voter Registration and Elections of County” and board members as appropriate.

SECTION 8. Section 7-11-30 of the 1976 Code of Laws is amended to read:

“Section 7‑11‑30. (A) A party may choose to change from nomination of candidates by primary to a method to nominate candidates by convention for all offices including, but not limited to, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, United States Senator, United States House of Representatives, Circuit Solicitor, State Senator, and members of the State House of Representatives if:

(1) there is a three‑fourths vote of the total membership of the convention to use the convention nomination process; and

(2) a majority of voters in that party’s next primary election approve the use of the convention nomination process.

(B) A party may not choose to nominate by party convention for an election cycle in which the filing period for candidates has begun.

(C) A political party nominating candidates by party convention shall nominate the party candidates and make the nominations public not later than the time for certifying candidates to the authority charged by law with preparing ballots for the general or special election.

(D) Nothing in this section requires a political party that has nominated candidates by convention in the previous election cycle to hold a primary in order to continue using the convention method to nominate candidates.

SECTION 9. 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 10. (A) The General Assembly finds that pursuant to Section 14 of Act 61 of 2013, the act was to take 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. The General Assembly further finds that the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* suspended the state’s requirement to obtain preclearance or a declaratory judgment under the provisions of the Voting Rights Act, which effectively removed the contingency upon which Act 61 was to take effect. As a result, the act does not contain a specific date to which it was to take effect.

(B) The General Assembly finds and declares that Act 61, which was approved on June 13, 2013, took effect on July 3, 2013 pursuant to the provisions of Section 2‑7‑10.

SECTION 11. For counties in which the previous offices of county election commissions and voter registration boards were not combined prior to the effective date of this act, the members of both the boards shall continue serving, in a combined capacity, until the Governor makes the combined board initial appointments pursuant to Section 7-5-10(B)(1). For counties in which the previous boards were separate and neither board had a director prior to the effective date of this act, the chairman of the former board of voter registration shall serve as the director of the board acting in a combined capacity and the chairman of the former county election commission shall serve as the chairman of the board acting in a combined capacityuntil such time as the Governor has made all the appointments to constitute the initial combined board pursuant to Section 7-5-10(B)(1). Once the combined board has been fully constituted, the board may elect from among its members a chairman and such officers as it considers desirable, and must also hire a director, pursuant to the provisions of Section 7-5-10(B)(5) and (6).

SECTION 12. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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