**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 7‑15‑465 SO AS TO ALLOW SOUTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY RESPONDERS, INCLUDING FIREFIGHTERS, PUBLIC UTILITY WORKERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL, EMERGENCY MEDICAL PERSONNEL, INSURANCE COMPANY CATASTROPHE RESPONSE PERSONNEL, OR SKILLED VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE DISPATCHED TO ASSIST WITH DISASTER RELIEF OR RECOVERY EFFORTS OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTY OF RESIDENCE TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO RECEIVE AND CAST ANY BALLOT THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN ELIGIBLE TO CAST HAD THEY REMAINED WITHIN THEIR COUNTY OF RESIDENCE.

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

SECTION 1. Article 7, Chapter 15, Title 7 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 7‑15‑465. (A) A South Carolina voter who is an emergency responder and who has been dispatched to assist with disaster relief or recovery efforts outside his county of residence shall have the opportunity to receive and cast any ballot he would have been eligible to cast if he had remained within his county of residence. The State Election Commission shall take all steps and actions that may be necessary including, but not limited to, electronically transmitting applications for voter registration and applications for absentee ballots and electronically transmitting absentee ballots for all elections for federal, state, and local offices to a voter in accordance with the voter’s preferred method of transmission.

(B) For purposes of this section, the term ‘emergency responder’ means:

(1) firefighters;

(2) public utility workers;

(3) law enforcement personnel;

(4) emergency medical personnel;

(5) insurance company catastrophe response personnel; or

(6) skilled volunteers.

(C) The State Election Commission shall promulgate regulations necessary for the implementation of this section.

(D) The provisions of this section must be construed liberally to encourage and allow South Carolina emergency responders full participation in the electoral process.”

SECTION 2. 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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