**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 7‑13‑25 SO AS TO ESTABLISH EARLY VOTING PROCEDURES; TO AMEND SECTION 7‑3‑20, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION, SO AS TO FURTHER DEFINE HIS DUTIES; AND TO AMEND SECTION 7‑15‑320, RELATING TO PERSONS QUALIFIED TO VOTE BY ABSENTEE BALLOT, SO AS TO INCLUDE VOTING DURING THE EARLY VOTING PERIOD AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE TIMES DURING WHICH AN ABSENTEE BALLOT MAY BE CAST.

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

SECTION 1. Article 1, Chapter 13, Title 7 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 7‑13‑25. (A) Notwithstanding the provisions of this chapter or Chapter 5 of this title, the authority charged by law with conducting an election shall establish a procedure by which a qualified elector may cast his ballot, without excuse, during an early voting period for all elections. The qualified elector may cast a ballot during an early voting period pursuant to this section.

(B) Early voting centers must be established and maintained to ensure that voters may cast only one ballot.

(C) A qualified elector may cast his ballot at an early voting center in the county in which he resides.

(D) Each county board of registration and elections must establish at least one early voting center and may establish up to three early voting centers. The county board of registration and elections shall determine the location of the early voting center or centers. Each early voting center must be supervised by election commission employees.

(E) The early voting period begins eleven days before an election and ends three days prior to the election.

(F) The county board of registration and elections shall determine the hours of operation for the early voting center or centers; however, the early voting center must be open for two Saturdays within the early voting period for statewide primaries and general elections.

(G) A sign must be posted prominently in the early voting center and shall have printed on it, ‘VOTING MORE THAN ONCE IS A MISDEMEANOR AND, UPON CONVICTION, A PERSON MUST BE FINED IN THE DISCRETION OF THE COURT OR IMPRISONED NOT MORE THAN THREE YEARS’.”

SECTION 2. Section 7‑3‑20(C) of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 265 of 2012, is further amended by adding at the end to read:

“(14) enter into the master file a separate designation each for voters casting absentee ballots and early ballots in a general election.”

SECTION 3. Section 7‑15‑320 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 43 of 2011, is further amended by adding at the end to read:

“(C) A qualified elector may vote during the early voting period pursuant to Section 7‑13‑25.

(D) A person may vote by a paper absentee ballot at any time during the absentee ballot period. Alternatively, a person may cast an absentee ballot by a voting machine in the county in which he resides from thirty days before an election through the day immediately preceding an election. Each county board of registration must establish the location of only one absentee ballot center. Absentee ballot centers must be maintained to ensure that voters may cast only one ballot. The absentee ballot center must be supervised by employees of the election commission or voter registration board.”

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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