AMENDED

September 2, 2020

**H. 5305**

Introduced by Reps. Norrell, B. Newton, Yow and Lucas

S. Printed 9/2/20--S. [SEC 9/3/20 12:41 PM]

Read the first time March 10, 2020.

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 7‑7‑350, AS AMENDED, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE DESIGNATION OF VOTING PRECINCTS IN LANCASTER COUNTY, SO AS TO REVISE THE NAMES OF SEVEN PRECINCTS, AND TO UPDATE THE MAP NUMBER ON WHICH THE NAMES OF THESE PRECINCTS MAY BE FOUND AND MAINTAINED BY THE REVENUE AND FISCAL AFFAIRS OFFICE.

Amend Title To Conform

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

SECTION 1. Due to the significant health threat and risks associated with 2019 Novel Coronavirus, also referred to as COVID-19, the following SECTIONS are changes for the 2020 General Election.

SECTION 2. A qualified elector must be permitted to vote by absentee ballot in an election if the qualified elector’s place of residence or polling place is located in an area subject to a state of emergency declared by the Governor and there are fewer than forty‑six days remaining until the date of the General Election to be held on November 3, 2020.

SECTION 3. Completed applications for absentee ballots must be received by the county board of elections and voter registration before: (a) 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 24, 2020, if submitted by mail; (b) 5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 30, 2020, if submitted in-person, or by the qualified elector’s authorized representative; or (c) 5:00 p.m. on Monday, November 2, 2020, for a qualified elector who appears in person. In addition, if a qualified elector is admitted to a hospital as an emergency patient from Friday, October 30, 2020, through Tuesday, November 3, 2020, an immediate family member of the qualified elector may obtain an application from the board on the day of the election, complete it, receive the ballot, deliver it personally to the patient who shall vote, and the immediate family member personally carry the ballot back to the board of voter registration and elections.

SECTION 4. A qualified elector must submit an absentee ballot to the county board of elections and voter registration either: (a) by mail; or (b) by returning the sealed envelopes containing the ballot during office hours, either personally or by authorized representative with the appropriate form as required by law. If the envelope containing an absentee ballot is returned in-person, the envelope must be submitted to staff or an official at the county board of elections and voter registration or at a satellite office where the election staff or officials receive the envelope at the time of delivery and examine the envelope, and the authorization form, if applicable. The county board of elections and voter registration shall ensure that returned absentee ballots are secured in a locked box within the office in accordance with Section 7-15-385.

SECTION 5.Beginning on October 5, 2020, each county board of elections and voter registration must provide for in-office absentee voting for the November 3, 2020, General Election.

SECTION 6. (A) The process of examining the return‑addressed envelopes containing absentee ballots, in accordance with the requirements of Section 7-15-420, may begin at 7:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 1, 2020, at a place designated in the notice by the authority charged with conducting the election.

(B) After all return-addressed envelopes have been emptied, but no earlier than 7:00 a.m. on November 3, 2020, the managers shall remove the ballots contained in the envelopes marked “Ballot Herein,” placing each ballot in the ballot box provided for the applicable contest.

(C) Beginning at 7:00 a.m. on November 3, 2020, the absentee ballots may be tabulated.

(D) Results of the absentee ballot tabulation must not be publicly reported until after the polls are closed.

SECTION 7. The authority charged by law with conducting an election must include in the public notice pursuant to Section 7-13-35 that the process of examining the return-addressed envelopes containing absentee ballots may begin at 7:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 1, 2020.

SECTION 8. The State Elections Commission is encouraged to develop recommendations for local county offices to reduce the spread of COVID-19 during in-person absentee voting and personal delivery of absentee ballots prior to the November 3, 2020, election and with in-person voting on November 3, 2020. The personal delivery of absentee ballots prior to November 2, 2020 must, to the extent practicable, be physically segregated from the in-person absentee voting process.

SECTION 9. The State Elections Commission must establish an aggressive voter education program concerning the provisions contained in this legislation. The State Elections Commission must educate the public as follows:

(1) Post information concerning the items in this legislation in a conspicuous location at each county board of elections and voter registration, each satellite office, the State Elections Commission office, and their respective websites.

(2) Train poll managers and poll workers to answer questions by electors concerning the changes in this legislation.

(3) Coordinate with local media outlets to disseminate information concerning the changes in the legislation.

(4) Post requests that registered electors ensure their current contact information including, but not limited to, at least one phone number and an email address, is provided to the appropriate county board of elections and voter registration. This request, and instructions on how qualified electors can check or update contact information, must be posted in a conspicuous location at each county board of elections and voter registration, each satellite office, the State Elections Commission office, and their respective websites, as well as coordinate with local media outlets.

(5) The State Elections Commission may implement additional educational programs in its discretion.

SECTION 10. (A) The provisions of this act only apply to the 2020 General Election, scheduled for November 3, 2020, and the processes to finalize the results of the 2020 General Election. The provisions of this act must not be applied to any other election or election process other than the 2020 General Election.

(B) The provisions of this act take effect upon approval by the Governor.

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