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H.317

Introduced by Representatives Stevens of Shoreham, Moran of Wardsboro,
Perley of Enosburgh, Taylor of Barre City, Till of Jericho and
Wilson of Manchester

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Elections; nominations; conduct of elections; randomized alphabet

Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to establish a randomized alphabet
for listing candidate names on ballots.

An act relating to establishing a randomized alphabet for listing candidate
names on ballots

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 17 V.S.A. § 2362(a) is amended to read:

(a) The ballots shall be prepared and furnished to the towns by the
secretary of state and shall contain the names of all candidates for nomination
at the primary. Candidate names shall be listed on the ballot pursuant to the
randomized alphabet as provided in section 2483 of this title. A separate ballot
for each major political party in the same format as is used for optical scan
tabulator ballots shall be printed in substantially the following form:

* * *

1 Sec. 2. 17 V.S.A. § 2472(b) is amended to read:

2 (b) Each office to be voted upon shall be separately indicated and preceded
3 by the word “For₂”; as: “For United States Senator.” Beneath the office to be
4 voted upon shall appear the instructions: “Vote for not more than (the number
5 of candidates to be elected).” The names of the candidates for each office shall
6 be listed ~~in alphabetical order by surname~~ pursuant to the randomized alphabet
7 as provided in section 2483 of this title according to the surname of the
8 candidate followed by the candidate’s town of residence and the party or
9 parties by which the candidate has been nominated, or in the case of
10 independent candidates who have not chosen some other name or
11 identification, by the word “Independent.” To the right of the party
12 designation shall be an oval in which the voter may indicate his or her choice
13 by making a cross (X) or filling in the oval if tabulators are being used. No
14 candidate’s name shall appear on the ballot more than once for any one office.

15 Sec. 3. 17 V.S.A. § 2473(a) is amended to read:

16 (a) When the president and vice president are to be elected, the ballot shall
17 contain the names of all candidates for these offices, ~~arranged in alphabetical~~
18 ~~order~~ listed pursuant to the randomized alphabet as provided in section 2483 of
19 this title according to the surname of the presidential candidate of each party.
20 The names of the electors shall not be printed on the ballot. A vote for the

1 presidential and vice presidential nominees of a party shall constitute a vote for
2 the electors nominated by that party.

3 Sec. 4. 17 V.S.A. § 2483 is added to read:

4 § 2483. RANDOMIZED ALPHABET

5 (a) The secretary of state shall conduct a drawing of the letters of the
6 alphabet, the result of which shall be known as a randomized alphabet. The
7 secretary of state shall perform one randomized alphabet drawing that shall
8 apply to each of the following:

9 (1) all primary elections;

10 (2) all general elections;

11 (3) all special elections;

12 (4) all run-off elections; and

13 (5) all local elections.

14 (b) The procedure for conducting a randomized alphabet shall be as
15 follows:

16 (1) Each letter of the alphabet shall be written on a separate slip of
17 paper, each of which shall be folded and inserted into a capsule. Each capsule
18 shall be opaque and of uniform weight, color, size, shape, and texture. The
19 capsules shall be placed in a container, which shall be shaken vigorously in
20 order to mix the capsules thoroughly. The container shall then be opened and
21 the capsules removed one at a time. As each is removed, it shall be opened

1 and the letter on the slip of paper read aloud and written down. The resulting
2 random order of letters constitutes the randomized alphabet, which is to be
3 used in the same manner as the conventional alphabet in determining the order
4 of candidates on ballots in elections. For example, if two candidates with the
5 surnames “Campbell” and “Carlson” are running for the same office, their
6 order on the ballot will depend on the order in which the letters “M” and “R”
7 were drawn in the randomized alphabet drawing.

8 (2) The randomized alphabet drawings shall be performed by the
9 secretary of state every two years, beginning July 1, 2014, and shall apply to
10 the elections described in subsection (a) of this section for the subsequent two
11 years. The secretary of state shall mail to a town clerk the result of a
12 randomized alphabet for a ballot required to be prepared at town expense under
13 the direction of the town clerk. The town clerk shall then use that randomized
14 alphabet to determine the order on that ballot of the names of the candidates
15 for office.

16 (3) Each randomized alphabet drawing shall be open to the public. The
17 secretary of state shall give public notice of the drawing at least 10 days prior
18 to the drawing.

1 Sec. 5. 17 V.S.A. § 2704 is amended to read:

2 § 2704. BALLOTS

3 A person voting at the primary shall be required to ask for the ballot of the
4 party in which the voter wishes to vote and an election official shall record the
5 voter's choice of ballot by marking the entrance checklist with a letter code, as
6 designated by the secretary of state, to indicate the voter's party choice. The
7 names of all candidates on the ballot shall be listed ~~in alphabetical order~~
8 pursuant to the randomized alphabet as provided in section 2483 of this title
9 according to the surname of the candidate. Each voter may vote for one
10 candidate for the presidential nomination of one party, either by placing a mark
11 opposite the printed name of a candidate as in other primaries, or by writing in
12 the name of the candidate of the voter's choice.

13 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

14 This act shall take effect on passage.