

H.514

An act relating to elections corrections

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

* * * Definitions * * *

Sec. 1. 17 V.S.A. § 2103 is amended to read:

§ 2103. DEFINITIONS

As used in this title, unless the context or a specific definition requires a different reading:

* * *

(10) “County officer” means judge of Probate, assistant judge of the Superior Court, State’s Attorney, sheriff, and high bailiff, ~~and justice of the peace.~~

* * *

(18)(A) “Local election” means any election ~~which~~ that deals with the selection of persons to fill public office or the settling of public questions solely within a single municipality.

(B) “Local election” also means an election to settle a public question in several municipalities, in which the municipalities must unanimously concur if the question is to be approved.

(C) The election of a ~~representative~~ Representative to the General Assembly is not a “local election.”

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* * * Registration of Voters * * *

Sec. 2. 17 V.S.A. § 2141 is amended to read:

§ 2141. POSTING OF CHECKLIST

(a) At least 30 days before any local, primary, or general election, the town clerk shall cause copies of the most recent checklist of the persons ~~qualified~~ registered to vote to be posted in two or more public places in the municipality in addition to being posted at the town clerk’s office; however, in a municipality having a population of less than 5,000 ~~qualified~~ registered voters, only one checklist in addition to the one posted in the town clerk’s office need be posted.

* * *

Sec. 3. 17 V.S.A. § 2154 is amended to read:

§ 2154. STATEWIDE VOTER CHECKLIST

* * *

(b) A registered voter’s month and day of birth, driver’s license or nondriver identification number, e-mail address, and the last four digits of ~~the~~ applicant’s his or her Social Security number shall be kept confidential and are exempt from public copying and inspection under the Public Records Act.

(c) Any person wishing to obtain a copy of all of the statewide voter checklist must swear or affirm, under penalty of perjury pursuant to 13 V.S.A. chapter 65, that the person will not use the checklist for commercial purposes. The affirmation shall be filed with the Secretary of State.

* * *

~~(e)(d)~~ No An elections official ~~may~~ shall not access the portion of the statewide voter checklist that is exempt from public inspection pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 317(c)(31), except for elections purposes.

Sec. 4. 1 V.S.A. § 317(c) is amended to read:

(c) The following public records are exempt from public inspection and copying:

* * *

(31) Records of a registered voter's month and day of birth, ~~motor vehicle operator's~~ driver's license or nondriver identification number, e-mail address, and the last four digits of ~~the applicant's~~ his or her Social Security number contained in an application to the statewide voter checklist or the statewide voter checklist established under 17 V.S.A. § 2154 or the failure to register to vote under 17 V.S.A. § 2145a.

* * *

* * * Political Parties * * *

Sec. 5. 17 V.S.A. § 2303 is amended to read:

§ 2303. TOWN CHAIR TO GIVE NOTICE

(a) The town chair or, if unavailable or if the records of the Secretary of State show there is no chair, any three voters of the town shall arrange to hold a caucus on the day designated by the State chair, in some public place within the town; and shall set the hour of the caucus.

(b)(1) At least five days before the day of the caucus, the town chair shall post a notice of the date, purpose, time, and place of the caucus in the town clerk's office and in at least one other public place in town.

(2) In towns of 3,000 or more population, he or she shall also publish the notice:

(A) in a newspaper having general circulation in the town; or

(B) in a nonpartisan electronic news media website that specializes in news of the State or the community.

(c) If three voters arrange to call the caucus, the voters shall designate one ~~of their number~~ person among them to perform the duties prescribed ~~above~~ in subsection (b) of this section for the town chair.

* * * Primary Elections * * *

Sec. 6. 17 V.S.A. § 2353 is amended to read:

§ 2353. PETITIONS TO PLACE NAMES ON BALLOT

(a) The name of any person shall be printed upon the primary ballot as a candidate for nomination by any major political party for any office indicated, if petitions containing the requisite number of signatures made by ~~legal~~ registered voters, in substantially the following form, are filed with the proper official, together with the person's written consent to having his or her name printed on the ballot:

I join in a petition to place on the primary ballot of the party the name of, whose residence is in the (city), (town) of in the county of, for the office of to be voted for on Tuesday, the day of August, 20; and I certify that I am at the present time a registered voter and am qualified to vote for a candidate for this office.

(b)(1) A person's name shall not be listed as a candidate on the primary ballot of more than one party in the same election.

(2) A person shall file a separate petition for each office for which he or she seeks to be a candidate.

Sec. 7. 17 V.S.A. § 2354 is amended to read:

§ 2354. SIGNING PETITIONS

(a) Any number of voters may sign the same petition.

(b)(1) A voter's signature shall not be valid unless at the time he or she signs, the voter is registered and qualified to vote for the candidate whose petition he or she signs.

(2) Each voter shall indicate his or her town of residence next to his signature.

(c) The signature of a voter on a candidate's petition does not necessarily indicate that the voter supports the candidate. ~~A voter shall not sign more than one petition for the same office, unless more than one nomination is to be made, in which case he or she may sign as many petitions as there are nominations to be made for the same office.~~

(d) A petition shall contain the name of only one candidate.

Sec. 8. 17 V.S.A. § 2356 is amended to read:

§ 2356. TIME FOR FILING PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF
NOMINATION

(a) Primary petitions for major party candidates and statements of nomination for minor party and independent candidates shall be filed ~~no~~ not sooner than the fourth Monday in April and not later than 5:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday after the first Monday in May preceding the primary election

prescribed by section 2351 of this chapter, and not later than 5:00 p.m. of the 62nd day prior to the day of a special primary election.

(b) A petition or statement of nomination shall apply only to the election cycle in which the petition or statement of nomination is filed.

Sec. 9. 17 V.S.A. § 2361 is amended to read:

§ 2361. CONSENT OF CANDIDATE

(a) A candidate for whom petitions containing sufficient valid signatures have been filed shall file with the official with whom the petitions were filed a consent to the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot. ~~The secretary of state~~ Secretary of State shall prepare and furnish forms for this purpose.

(b)(1) The consent shall set forth the name of the candidate, as the candidate wishes to have it printed on the ballot, the candidate's town of residence, and correct mailing address.

(2) If a candidate wishes to use a nickname, the format on the ballot shall be the candidate's first name, the nickname set off in quotations, and the candidate's last name.

(3) Professional titles such as "Dr.," "Esq.," or "CPA" shall not be used as part of a candidate's name on the ballot.

(c) The consent shall be filed on or before the day petitions are due. Unless a consent is filed, the candidate's name shall not be printed on the primary ballot.

Sec. 10. 17 V.S.A. § 2362 is amended to read:

§ 2362. PRIMARY BALLOTS

(a) ~~The ballots shall be prepared~~ A separate ballot for each major political party shall be printed and furnished to the towns by the Secretary of State and shall contain the names of all candidates for nomination by that party at the primary. Ballots shall be printed on index stock and configured to be readable by vote tabulators. ~~A separate ballot for each major political party~~ Ballots shall be printed in substantially the following form:

OFFICIAL VERMONT PRIMARY ELECTION BALLOT

VOTE ON ONE PARTY BALLOT ONLY AND PLACE IN BALLOT

BOX OR VOTE TABULATOR

ALL OTHER PARTY BALLOTS MUST BE PLACED IN UNVOTED

BALLOT BOX

[MAJOR POLITICAL PARTY NAME]

Instructions to voters: Use black pen or pencil to fill in the oval. To vote for a ~~candidate~~ person whose name is printed on the ballot, fill in the oval ~~at to the~~ right of ~~that person's name~~ the name of that person. To vote for a ~~candidate~~ person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write or stick his or her ~~the~~ person's name on in the blank line in the appropriate block and space provided

and fill in the oval to the right of that blank line the write-in space. Do not
vote for more candidates than the "Vote for Not More Than" number for an
office. If you make a mistake, tear, or deface the ballot, return it to an election
official and obtain another ballot. Do not erase. When there are two or more
persons to be elected to one office, you may vote for any number of candidates
up to and including the maximum number.

* * *

Sec. 11. 17 V.S.A. § 2363 is amended to read:

§ 2363. ~~SEPARATE PARTY BALLOTS~~ VOTER'S CHOICE OF PARTY

(a) ~~The names of all candidates of a party shall be printed upon one ballot.~~
~~Each section shall bear in print larger than any other print on the ballot the~~
~~words VOTE IN ONE PARTY ONLY OR YOUR BALLOT WILL BE VOID~~
~~in a prominent place on the ballot. The~~ A voter shall vote for the candidates of
one party only. A person voting at the primary shall not be required to indicate
his or her party choice to any election official.

(b) [Repealed.]

Sec. 12. 17 V.S.A. § 2369 is amended to read:

§ 2369. DETERMINING WINNER; TIE VOTES

(a) A person who receives a plurality of all the votes cast by a party in a
primary shall be a candidate of that party for the office designated on the
ballot.

(b)(1) If, after the period for requesting a recount under section 2602 of this title has expired, no candidate has requested a recount and two or more candidates of the same party are tied for the same office, the choice among those tied shall be determined upon five days' notice and not later than 10 days following the primary election by the committee of that party, which shall meet to nominate a candidate from among the tied candidates. The committee that nominates a candidate shall be as follows:

~~(1)~~(A) the State committee of a party for a State or congressional office;

~~(2)~~(B) the senatorial district committee for State Senate;

~~(3)~~(C) the county committee for county office; or

~~(4)~~(D) the representative district committee for a Representative to the General Assembly.

~~(e)~~(2) The committee chair shall certify the candidate nomination for the general election to the Secretary of State within 48 hours of the nomination.

* * * Nominations by Party Committee * * *

Sec. 13. 17 V.S.A. § 2381 is amended to read:

§ 2381. APPLICABILITY OF SUBCHAPTER

(a) A candidate may also be nominated and have the candidate's name printed on the general election ballot in accordance with the provisions set forth in this subchapter, in the following instances:

(1) In case of a vacancy on the general election ballot occasioned by death, removal, or withdrawal of a candidate, or the failure of a major political party to nominate a candidate by primary;

(2) In case a minor political party desires to nominate a candidate for any office for which major political parties nominate candidates by primary or for the offices of President and Vice President of the United States;

(3) In case of nomination for the office of justice of the peace, in the event that such nomination has not already been made by caucus as provided in section 2413 of this chapter.

* * *

Sec. 14. 17 V.S.A. § 2382 is amended to read:

§ 2382. WHICH COMMITTEE TO NOMINATE

Nominations of party candidates pursuant to this subchapter shall be made by the following political committee of the party:

(1) By the ~~state~~ State committee in the case of ~~state~~ President and Vice President of the United States or State or congressional officers;

* * *

Sec. 15. 17 V.S.A. § 2386 is amended to read:

§ 2386. TIME FOR FILING STATEMENTS

(a) In the case of the failure of a major political party to nominate a candidate by primary, a statement shall be filed not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth day following the primary.

(b) In the case of the death or withdrawal of a candidate after the primary election, the party committee shall have seven days from the date of the death or withdrawal to nominate a candidate. In no event, shall a statement be filed later than 60 days prior to the general election.

(c)(1) In the case of a nomination by a minor political party, a statement shall be filed as set forth in section 2356 of this chapter.

(2) A statement shall apply only to the election cycle in which the statement is filed.

(d) In the case of a nomination for the office of justice of the peace, a statement shall be filed as set forth in section 2413 of this chapter.

* * * Independent Candidate Nominations * * *

Sec. 16. 17 V.S.A. § 2402 is amended to read:

§ 2402. REQUISITES OF STATEMENT

(a) A statement of nomination shall contain:

- (1) The name of the office for which the nomination is made.
- (2) The candidate's name and residence.

(3) If desired, a name, or other identification (in not more than three words) to be printed on the ballot following the candidate's name.

(4) In the case of nomination for President or Vice President of the United States, ~~the~~:

(A) The name and state of residence of each candidate for such office, together with the name, town of residence, and correct mailing address of each nominee for the office of elector.

(B)(i) The original statement of nomination shall include a certification by the town clerk of each town where the signers appear to be voters that the persons whose names appear as signers of the statement are registered voters in the town and of the total number of valid signers from the town.

(ii) Only the number of signers certified as registered voters by each town clerk on the original statement of nomination forms shall count toward the required number of signatures.

(C) The statement shall also be accompanied by a consent form from each nominee for elector. The consent form shall be similar to the consent form prescribed in section 2361 of this title.

* * *

(d)(1) A statement of nomination and a completed and signed consent form shall be filed:

(A) in the case of nomination for President or Vice President of the United States, ~~no sooner~~ not earlier than the fourth Monday in April and not later than 5:00 p.m. on the August 1 preceding the presidential general election;

(B) in the case of nomination for justice of the peace, ~~no~~ not earlier than the fourth Monday in April and not later than 5:00 p.m. on the third day following the primary election; or

(C) in the case of any other independent candidate, ~~no sooner than the fourth Monday in April and not later than 5:00 p.m. on the Thursday preceding the primary election prescribed by section 2351 of this chapter, and not later than 5:00 p.m. of the third day prior to the day of a special primary election in accordance with section 2356 of this chapter.~~

(2) ~~No~~ A public official receiving nominations shall not accept a petition unless a completed and signed consent form is filed at the same time.

(3) A statement of nomination shall apply only to the election cycle in which the statement of nomination is filed.

(e) The Secretary of State shall prescribe and furnish forms for a statement of nomination.

(f) In the event that an independent vice presidential candidate withdraws in accordance with section 2412 of this chapter, the presidential candidate may submit to the Secretary of State on or before the ballot printing deadline a new

consent form signed by the presidential candidate and his or her new vice presidential candidate.

Sec. 17. 17 V.S.A. § 2403 is amended to read:

§ 2403. NUMBER OF CANDIDATES; PARTY NAMES

(a) A statement of nomination shall contain the name of only one candidate, except in the case of presidential and ~~vice-presidential~~ vice presidential candidates, who may be nominated by means of the same statement of nomination. ~~A person shall not sign more than one statement of nomination for the same office.~~

(b)(1) The political or other name on a statement of nomination shall be substantially different from the name of any organized political party. It shall also be substantially different from the political or other name already appearing on any other statement of nomination for the same office then on file with the same officer for the same election; ~~if~~.

(2) ~~If the secretary of state~~ Secretary of State determines that it is not substantially different, the candidate named on the statement shall select a different political or other name, otherwise the ~~secretary~~ Secretary ~~may reject the statement of nomination~~ shall print the word "Independent" on the ballot for that candidate.

(c)(1) Except in the case of presidential and vice presidential candidates, the word "independent" may not be used as part of a party name; ~~if~~.

(2) If no party is indicated, the word “Independent” shall be printed on the ballot, ~~and no~~.

(3) A candidate appearing on the ballot as a candidate of a political party shall not also appear on the ballot as an “Independent.”

* * * Nominations; Miscellaneous * * *

Sec. 18. 17 V.S.A. § 2412 is amended to read:

§ 2412. WITHDRAWAL OF CANDIDACY

(a)(1) A candidate who has been validly nominated by one of the methods prescribed in this chapter shall have a right to withdraw his or her candidacy up until 5:00 p.m. on the ~~third~~ tenth day following the primary by filing a written notice of withdrawal with the town clerk in the case of a candidate for justice of the peace, and with the ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State in the case of all other offices.

(2) The name of a candidate who has withdrawn in accordance with the provisions of this subsection shall not be printed on the ballot.

(b) After ~~that~~ the date described in subdivision (a)(1) of this section, if the candidate has filed a written notice of withdrawal, the town clerk or ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State may still remove the candidate’s name from the ballot up until the printing deadline.

Sec. 19. 17 V.S.A. § 2472 is amended to read:

§ 2472. CONTENTS

* * *

(b)(1) Each office to be voted upon shall be separately indicated and preceded by the word “For,” as: “For United States Senator.” Beneath the office to be voted upon shall appear the instructions: “Vote for not more than (the number of candidates to be elected).”

(2) The names of the candidates for each office shall be listed in alphabetical order by surname, followed by the candidate’s town of residence, and the party or parties by which the candidate has been nominated, or in the case of independent candidates who have not chosen some other name or identification, by the word “Independent.” The word “party” shall not be printed on the ballot following a candidate’s party name.

* * *

* * * Election Officials * * *

Sec. 20. 17 V.S.A. § 2455 is amended to read:

§ 2455. ~~DUTIES OF ELECTION OFFICIALS;~~ DUTIES; POLITICAL
PARTY REPRESENTATION

(a) The assistant election officers, together with the presiding officer and the board of civil authority, shall constitute the election officials.

(b) Except as may be specifically provided in this title, the presiding officer shall notify each election official of the hours when he or she shall be present to work at the polls and of the duties assigned to each election official.

(c) When the provisions of this title require two or more elections officials of different political parties to perform an act, that political party representation requirement shall not be required if attempts to conform to it were not successful and those attempts were documented by the presiding officer.

* * * Vote Tabulators * * *

Sec. 21. 17 V.S.A. § 2491 is amended to read:

§ 2491. POLITICAL SUBDIVISION; VOTE TABULATORS

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, a board of civil authority may, at a meeting held not less than 60 days prior to an election and warned pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 801, vote to require the political subdivision for which it is elected to use vote tabulators for the registering and counting of votes in subsequent local, primary, or general elections, or any combination of those.

(b) A town with 1,000 or more registered voters as of December 31 in an even-numbered ~~years~~ year shall use vote tabulators for the registering and counting of votes in subsequent general elections.

(c)(1) The Office of the Secretary of State shall pay the following costs associated with this section by using federal Help America Vote Act funds, as available:

(A) full purchase and warranty cost of vote tabulators, ballot boxes, and two memory cards for each tabulator;

(B) annual maintenance costs of vote tabulators for each town; and

(C) the first \$500.00 of the first pair of a vote tabulator's memory cards' configuration costs for each primary and general election.

(2) A town shall pay the remainder of any cost not covered by subdivision (1) of this subsection.

Sec. 22. 17 V.S.A. § 2508 is amended to read:

§ 2508. CAMPAIGNING DURING POLLING HOURS; VOTER ACCESS

(a)(1) The presiding officer shall ~~insure~~ ensure during polling hours on the day of the election that:

~~(1)(A)~~ Within the building containing a polling place, no campaign literature, stickers, buttons, name stamps, information on write-in candidates, or other political materials are displayed, placed, handed out, or allowed to remain; ~~and~~

~~(2)(B)~~ Within the building containing a polling place, no candidate, election official, or other person distributes election materials, solicits voters regarding an item or candidate on the ballot, or otherwise campaigns; and

~~(3)~~(C) On the walks and driveways leading to a building in which a polling place is located, no candidate or other person ~~may~~ physically ~~interfere~~ interferes with the progress of a voter to and from the polling place.

(2) The provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection shall apply to the town clerk's office during any period of early or absentee voting.

(b) During polling hours, the presiding officer shall control the placement of signs on the property of the polling place in a fair manner.

(c) The provisions of this section shall be posted in the notice required by section 2521 of this title.

* * * Early or Absentee Voters * * *

Sec. 23. 17 V.S.A. § 2531 is amended to read:

§ 2531. APPLICATION FOR EARLY VOTER ABSENTEE BALLOT

(a)(1) A voter who expects to be an early or absentee voter, or an authorized person on behalf of such voter, may apply for an early voter absentee ballot until 5:00 p.m. or the closing of the town clerk's office on the day preceding the election.

(2) If a town clerk does not have regular office hours on the day before the election, and the office will not otherwise be open on the day preceding the election, an application may be filed until the closing of the clerk's office on the last day that office has hours preceding the election.

(b) All applications shall be filed with the town clerk of the town in which the early or absentee voter is registered to vote. The town clerk shall file written applications and memoranda of verbal applications in his or her office, and shall retain the applications and memoranda for 90 days following the election, at which time they may be destroyed.

(c) Voting by early voter absentee ballot shall be allowed only in elections using the Australian ballot system.

Sec. 24. 17 V.S.A. § 2532 is amended to read:

§ 2532. APPLICATIONS; FORM

(a)(1) An early or absentee voter, or an authorized family member or health care provider acting in the voter's behalf, may apply for an early voter absentee ballot by telephone, in person, or in writing. "Family member" here means a person's spouse, children, brothers, sisters, parents, spouse's parents, grandparents, and spouse's grandparents. Any other authorized person may apply in writing or in person; provided, however, that voter authorization to such a person shall not be given by robotic phone call or by e-mail.

(2) The application shall be in substantially the following form:

REQUEST FOR EARLY VOTER ABSENTEE BALLOT

Name of early or absentee voter: _____

Voter's Town of Residence: _____

Current physical address (address where you reside): _____

~~Residence (if different):~~ _____

Telephone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Date: _____

I request early voter absentee ballot(s) for the election(s) checked below:

- (1) Annual Town Meeting;
- (2) All other local elections;
- (3) August Primary Election;
- (4) Presidential Primary (YOU MUST SELECT PARTY);
- (5) November General Election

Please deliver the ballot(s) as indicated below (check one):

(1) Mail to voter at: _____

Street or P.O. Box Town/City State Zip Code

(2) Delivery by two Justices of the Peace (this may only be selected if you are ill or if you have a physical disability).

If applicant is other than early or absentee voter:

Name of applicant: _____

Address of applicant: _____

Relationship to early or absentee voter: _____

Organization, if applicable: _____

Date: _____ Signature of applicant: _____

(3) If the application is made by telephone or in writing, the information supplied must be in substantial conformance with the information requested on this form.

* * *

(d) An application for an early voter absentee ballot shall be valid for ~~only one election, unless specific request is made by an early or absentee voter that~~ the application be valid for both a primary election, excluding a presidential primary, and the general election next following the elections specified by the applicant, as long as ~~both~~ all ballots are to be mailed to the same address.

* * *

Sec. 25. 17 V.S.A. § 2537 is amended to read:

§ 2537. EARLY OR ABSENTEE VOTING IN THE TOWN CLERK'S
OFFICE

A voter may, if he or she chooses, apply in person to the town clerk for the early voter absentee ballots and envelopes rather than having them mailed as required by section 2539 of this title. In this case, the clerk shall furnish the early voter absentee ballots and envelopes when a valid application has been made. The voter may mark his or her ballots, ~~seal~~ place them in the envelope, sign the certificate, and return the ballots in the ~~sealed~~ envelope containing the certificate to the town clerk or an assistant town clerk; without leaving the office of the town clerk, or the voter may take the ballots and return them to

the town clerk in the same manner as if the ballots had been received by mail.

No person, except justices of the peace as provided in section 2538 of this title, may take any ballot from the town clerk on behalf of any other person.

Sec. 26. 17 V.S.A. § 2540 is amended to read:

§ 2540. INSTRUCTIONS TO BE SENT WITH BALLOTS

(a) The town clerk shall send with all early voter absentee ballots and envelopes printed instructions, which may be included on the envelope, in substantially the following form:

INSTRUCTIONS FOR EARLY OR ABSENTEE VOTERS

1. Mark the ballots.
2. ~~Seal~~ Place them in this envelope.
3. Fill out and sign the certificate on the envelope.
4. Mail or deliver the ~~sealed~~ envelope containing the ballots to the town clerk of the town where you are a registered voter in time to arrive ~~no~~ not later than election day.

Note: If these ballots have been brought to you personally by two justices of the peace because of your illness or physical disability, just return them to the justices after you have ~~sealed and~~ signed the envelope. **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO MARK YOUR BALLOTS IN PRIVATE** - but if you ask for help in filling out the ballots, they will give it to you.

BE SURE TO FILL OUT AND SIGN THE CERTIFICATE ON THIS
ENVELOPE OR YOUR VOTE WILL NOT COUNT!

* * *

Sec. 27. 17 V.S.A. § 2543 is amended to read:

§ 2543. RETURN OF BALLOTS

(a) After marking the ballots and signing the certificate on the envelope, the early or absentee voter to whom the same are addressed shall return the ballots to the clerk of the town in which he or she is a voter, in the manner prescribed, except that in the case of a voter to whom ballots are delivered by justices, the ballots shall be returned to the justices calling upon him or her, and they shall deliver them to the town clerk.

(b) Once an early voter absentee ballot has been returned to the clerk in the sealed envelope with the signed certificate, it shall be stored in a secure place and shall not be returned to the voter for any reason.

(c) If a ballot includes more than one page, the early or absentee voter need only return the page upon which the voter has marked his or her vote.

(d)(1) All early voter absentee ballots returned ~~to the clerk before the polls close on election day~~ as follows shall be counted:

(A) by any means, to the town clerk's office before the close of business on the day preceding the election;

(B) by mail, to the town clerk's office before the close of the polls on the day of the election; and

(C) by hand delivery to the presiding officer at the voter's polling place.

(2) An early voter absentee ballot returned in a manner other than those set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection shall not be counted.

Sec. 28. 17 V.S.A. § 2546 is amended to read:

§ 2546. DEPOSIT OF EARLY VOTER ABSENTEE BALLOTS IN
BALLOT BOX OR VOTE TABULATOR

~~(a)(1)(A) No sooner~~ Not earlier than 30 days before the opening of polls on election day, the town clerk ~~of a municipality with at least 300 registered voters on its checklist~~ may direct two election officials working together to do all of the following:

(1) open the outside envelope in order to and sort early voter absentee ballots by ward and district, may data enter the return of the ballots by the voter, may if necessary;

(2) determine that the certificate has been properly completed and signed;

(3) check the name of the early voter off the entrance checklist; and may

(4) place the ~~inside~~ certificate envelopes ~~in various secure containers~~ into a secure container marked “checked in early voter absentee ballots” to be transported to the polling places on election day.

~~(B) No sooner than 48 hours before the opening of polls on election day, a town clerk in all other municipalities may direct two election officials working together to open the outside envelope and remove the certificate envelope in order to determine that an early voter absentee ballot certificate has been properly signed by the early voter, and that the name of the early voter appears on the checklist.~~

~~(2) The election officials shall check the name of the early voter off the entrance checklist and place the sealed envelope into a secure container marked “checked in early voter absentee ballots” to be transported to the polling place on election day.~~

~~(3) Upon opening of the polls on election day, ballots from this container shall be opened by election officials, who are not members of the same political party, and deposited either into the ballot box or into the vote tabulator.~~

(b) The town clerk or presiding officer shall deliver the unopened early voter absentee ballots to the election officials at the place where the entrance checklist is located. Upon the opening of the polls on election day:

(1) If the ballots are in a container marked “checked in early voter absentee ballots,” ~~two~~ one election ~~officials from different political parties~~ official shall open the certificate envelopes, turn the certificate side face down, and hand the envelope face down to a second election official from a different political party, who shall remove the ballots from the envelopes and deposit ~~the ballots into them in~~ the ballot box or into the vote tabulator.

(2) If the ballots have not been previously checked off the entrance checklist and if ~~an~~ two election ~~official determines~~ officials, from different political parties, determine that the certificate on the envelope is properly completed and signed by the early voter, the name of the early voter appears on the checklist, and the early voter is not a first-time voter in the municipality who registered by mail and is marked on the checklist as requiring additional documentation, the election ~~official~~ officials shall mark the checklist, open the ~~envelope~~ certificate envelope, turn the certificate side face down, and hand the envelope face down to a third election official who shall remove the ballots from the envelopes and deposit the ballot ballots in the proper ballot box or vote tabulator.

(3)(A) If the early voter is a first-time voter who registered by mail, ~~the~~ two election official officials from different political parties shall determine whether the identification required under subdivision 2563(1) of this title has been submitted by the voter. Upon ascertaining that the proper identification

has been submitted by the voter, the election ~~official~~ officials shall mark the checklist, open the certificate envelope, turn the certificate side face down, and hand the envelope face down to a third election official who shall remove the ballots from the envelopes and deposit the ballot in the ~~proper~~ ballot box or vote tabulator.

(B) If the proper identification has not been submitted, the ballot shall be treated as a provisional ballot, as provided in subchapter 6A of this chapter.

(c) All early voter absentee ballots shall be commingled with the ballots of voters who have voted in person.

Sec. 29. 17 V.S.A. § 2546a is amended to read:

§ 2546a. DAY PRECEDING ELECTION; DEPOSIT OF EARLY VOTER

ABSENTEE BALLOTS IN VOTE TABULATOR

* * *

(d) Count and inspection.

(1) On the day preceding the election, at least one hour prior to depositing the ballots in the vote tabulator, the town clerk and the election officials shall:

(1)(A) first open the secure container marked “checked in early voter absentee ballots,” count the ~~sealed~~ certificate envelopes containing those ballots, and record the number counted; and

~~(2)(B)~~ permit these ~~sealed~~ certificate envelopes to be inspected by members of the public.

(2) Any early voter absentee ballot that is returned after the expiration of the period for the count and inspection shall be processed on the day of the election in accordance with section 2546 of this subchapter.

(e) Processing.

(1) Immediately after the expiration of the period for the count and inspection described in subsection (d) of this section, the town clerk and election officials shall open each ~~sealed~~ certificate envelope containing an early voter absentee ballot that was counted under subdivision (d)(1) of this section and deposit each ballot into a vote tabulator.

(2) The town clerk and the election officials shall ensure that all procedures for handling ballots are followed to the fullest extent practicable.

(3) At the end of the processing, the town clerk shall verify that the vote tabulator's memory card is locked in place and shall sign a statement verifying how many early voter absentee ballots were counted by the vote tabulator and that the memory card is so locked. The town clerk shall compare the vote tabulator's number of counted ballots to the original count of those ballots described in ~~subsection (d)~~ subdivision (d)(1) of this section.

* * *

Sec. 30. 17 V.S.A. § 2547 is amended to read:

§ 2547. DEFECTIVE BALLOTS

(a) If upon examination by the election officials it shall appear that ~~any of~~ the following defects is present, either the ballot or the unopened certificate envelope shall be marked “defective” and the ballot shall not be counted:

(1) the early or absentee voter is not legally qualified to vote, ~~or;~~

(2) the early or absentee voter has voted in person, ~~or that;~~

(3) the affidavit on ~~any~~ the certificate envelope is ~~insufficient~~ not completed;

(4) the certificate is not signed, ~~or;~~

(5) the voted ballot is not in the ~~voted ballot~~ certificate envelope; ~~or;~~

(6) in the case of a primary vote, the early or absentee voter has failed to return the unvoted primary ballots, ~~such envelope shall be marked “defective,” and the ballots inside shall not be counted and.~~

(b) Each defective ballot or unopened certificate envelope shall be:

(A) affixed with a note from the presiding officer indicating the reason it was determined to be defective;

(B) placed with other such defective ballots in an envelope marked “Defective Ballots – Voter Checked Off Checklist - Do Not Count”; and

(C) ~~shall be~~ returned in the ~~unopened~~ that envelope to the town clerk in the manner prescribed by section 2590 of this title.

(c) The provisions of this section shall be indicated prominently in the early or absentee voter material prepared by the Secretary of State.

Sec. 31. 17 V.S.A. § 2563 is amended to read:

§ 2563. ADMITTING VOTER

Before a person may be admitted to vote, he or she shall announce his or her name and, if requested, his or her place of residence in a clear and audible tone of voice, or present his or her name in writing, or otherwise identify himself or herself by appropriate documentation. The election officials attending the entrance of the polling place shall then verify that the person's name appears on the checklist for the polling place.

(1) If the name does appear, and if no one immediately challenges the person's right to vote on grounds of identity or having previously voted in the same election, the election officials shall repeat the name of the person and:

(A)(i) If the checklist indicates that the person is a first-time voter in the municipality who registered by mail, whose driver's license, nondriver identification number, or last four digits of his or her social security number provided by the applicant have not been verified by the Secretary of State, and who has not provided required identification before the opening of the polls, require the person to present any one of the following: a valid photo identification; a copy of a current utility bill; a copy of a current bank

statement; or a copy of a government check, paycheck, or any other government document that shows the current name and address of the voter.

* * *

* * * Provisional Voting * * *

Sec. 32. 17 V.S.A. § 2555 is amended to read:

§ 2555. PROVISIONAL BALLOT ENVELOPES

The clerk shall deliver to each polling place on the date of the election a sufficient number of provisional ballot envelopes printed with a voter attestation. The attestation shall include:

* * *

(4) A statement informing the provisional voter: ~~“Provisional balloting allows a provisional voter only to vote in federal elections. If you wish to vote in any other State or local election, you should return this form to the elections officials and file an appeal in Superior Court in the county in which you live pursuant to section 2148 of this title. If you choose to vote by provisional ballot, after the close of the polls, the town clerk will determine whether you meet all eligibility requirements. If the clerk denies your application, he or she will inform you that the application has been denied.”~~

* * * Process of Voting * * *

Sec. 33. 17 V.S.A. § 2564 is amended to read:

§ 2564. CHALLENGES

(a)(1)(A) Each organized political party, each candidate on the ballot not representing an organized political party, and each committee supporting or opposing any public question on the ballot shall have the right to have not more than two representatives for each entrance checklist table in a polling place but outside the guardrail for the purpose of observing the voting process and challenging the right of any person to vote.

(B) In no event shall such representatives be permitted to interfere with the orderly conduct of the election, and the presiding officer shall have authority to impose reasonable rules for the preservation of order.

(C) However, in all cases the representatives shall have the right to hear or see the name of a person seeking to vote, and they shall have the right to make an immediate challenge to a person's right to vote.

(2) The grounds of challenge of a person whose name appears on the checklist shall be only:

~~(1)~~(A) that he or she is not, in fact, the person whose name appears on the checklist; or

~~(2)~~(B) that he or she has previously voted in the same election.

(b) If a challenge is issued, the members of the board of civil authority present in the polling place shall immediately convene, informally hear the facts, and decide whether the challenge should be sustained.

(1) If the board overrules the challenge, the person shall immediately be admitted within the guardrail and permitted to vote.

(2) If the board sustains the challenge, the person shall not be admitted unless, before the polls close, he or she shall obtain a court order directing that he or she be permitted to vote.

Sec. 34. 17 V.S.A. § 2566 is amended to read:

§ 2566. MARKING BALLOTS

On receiving his or her ballots, the voter shall forthwith, and without leaving the polling place or going outside the guardrail, proceed to one of the booths not occupied by any other person and vote by filling in the appropriate square or oval opposite the name of the candidate of his or her choice for each office, or by ~~filling~~ writing in the name of the candidate of his or her choice in the blank space provided and filling in the square or oval to the right of that blank space.

Sec. 35. 17 V.S.A. § 2568 is amended to read:

§ 2568. ~~SPOILED~~ REMOVING BALLOTS FROM POLLING PLACE;

REPLACEMENT, BLANK, AND UNUSED BALLOTS

(a) Removing ballots from polling place. A person shall not take or remove a ballot from the polling place before the close of the polls.

(b) Replacement ballots.

(1) If a voter ~~spoils~~ desires a replacement ballot, he or she may obtain ~~others another, one at a time,~~ not exceeding three in all, upon each time returning to an election official the ~~spoiled one~~ previous ballot he or she was provided.

(2) If a ballot is returned to an election official by a voter desiring a replacement ballot, the ballot returned by the voter shall be immediately delivered to the presiding officer and shall be immediately marked “Do Not Count—Voter Received Replacement Ballot” and placed in an envelope containing all ballots returned by the voters that is clearly marked “Do Not Count—Replaced Ballots.” At the close of the polls, this envelope shall be sealed and delivered to the clerk pursuant to section 2590 of this chapter.

~~If a person fails to use a ballot, he or she shall deliver it to the presiding officer before going outside the guardrail.~~

(c) ~~Spoiled and unused~~ Unused ballots ~~shall be immediately canceled and, together with those,~~ Ballots originally delivered to the presiding officer ~~which~~

that remain undistributed to the voters; shall be preserved and returned to the town clerks; ~~in the same manner provided for in section 2590 of this title,~~ and the clerk shall preserve them in such condition, unless called for by some authority entitled to demand and receive them. After 90 days from the date the election is held, they may be destroyed or distributed by the town clerk for educational purposes or for any other purpose the town clerk deems appropriate.

Sec. 36. 17 V.S.A. § 2570 is amended to read:

§ 2570. DEPOSITING BALLOTS

(a) In primary elections, the voter shall first hand any unvoted primary ballots to the appropriate election official, who shall deposit those ballots in a receptacle marked for unvoted primary ballots. The voter shall then deposit the voted ballot in the ballot box or vote tabulator, unless the voter requires assistance in depositing the ballot.

* * *

* * * Count and Return of Votes * * *

Sec. 37. 17 V.S.A. § 2586 is amended to read:

§ 2586. ~~SECRETARY OF STATE TO PREPARE FORMS~~ TALLY
SHEETS; SUMMARY SHEETS; RETURNS

The ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State shall design, prepare, and distribute a sufficient supply of the following forms, which ~~shall~~ may be used in each polling place during the counting process:

(1) Tally sheets.

(A) These sheets shall provide a place to identify the office or question for which the ballots are being counted, the name of each candidate for that office, and the signature of the pair of election officials actually counting the ballots.

(B) Votes for each candidate or question shall be recorded on the tally sheets by means of “tick” marks or some other convenient system, and the total shall then be written on the tally sheet.

(C) Blank votes (undervotes) and ~~spoiled ballots~~ overvotes shall be indicated.

(D) ~~All~~ In towns that count ballots by hand, all votes must be accounted for on the tally sheets.

* * *

Sec. 38. 17 V.S.A. § 2587 is amended to read:

§ 2587. RULES FOR COUNTING ~~BALLOTS~~ VOTES

(a)(1) In counting ~~ballots~~ votes, election officials shall attempt to ascertain the intent of the voter, as expressed by markings on the ballot ~~which~~ and in a manner that is consistent with guidance that shall be adopted by rule by the Secretary of State. ~~The Secretary shall adopt, by rule, guidance on determining whether a ballot is spoiled.~~

(2) If it is impossible to determine the intent of the voter for any office or public question, the ~~ballot~~ vote shall be counted as a blank or spoiled overvote, as the case may be, for that office or question; but that determination shall not control any other office or question appearing on the ballot for which the voter's intent can be determined.

(3) If they have any doubt about the intent of the voter or any other question about a ~~ballot~~ vote, the election officials counting the ~~ballot~~ vote shall bring it to the presiding officer, who shall present the question of how to treat the ~~ballot~~ vote to the assembled election officials. The decision of how to treat the ~~ballot~~ vote shall be made by majority vote of the election officials who are present.

(b) If the voter marks more names than there are persons to be elected to an office, or marks contradictory sides on any public question, ~~his or her ballot shall not be counted for that office or public question~~ overvotes equal to the

number of candidates to be elected to the office must be recorded on the tally sheet for that office or question.

(c)(1) A write-in vote for a candidate whose name is pre-printed on the ballot shall be counted as a vote for that candidate.

(2) A person who receives more than one vote for the same office on any ballot shall be entitled to one vote, and one vote only.

(d) If the board of civil authority decides by majority vote of those present that any markings on a ballot were made for the purpose of enabling it to be identified and the vote traced, so as to defeat the secrecy of the ballot;

(1) that ballot shall be;

(A) rejected;

(B) marked defective and affixed with a note from the presiding officer as to why it was marked defective; and

(C) placed in the defective ballot envelope in accordance with subsection 2547(b) of this chapter; and

(2) the election officials shall edit the vote tabulator totals reported on the vote tabulator tape, as necessary. ~~The board shall make a record of the rejection and the reason for it, and shall preserve the record with the ballot in question.~~

(e)(1) In the case of “write-in” votes, the act of writing in the name of a candidate, or pasting a label containing a candidate’s name upon the ballot,

without other indications of the voter's intent, shall constitute a vote for that candidate, even though the voter did not fill in the square or oval after the name.

(2) The election officials counting ballots and tallying results shall list every person who receives a "write-in" vote and the number of votes received.

(A) On each tally sheet, the counters shall add together the names of candidates that are clearly the same person, even though a nickname or last name is used.

(B) Names of fictitious or deceased persons shall not be listed and shall be recorded on the tally sheet as a blank vote.

* * *

Sec. 39. 17 V.S.A. § 2588 is amended to read:

§ 2588. FILING RETURNS

For any primary or general election:

~~(a)(1)~~(A) In towns that count all ballots by hand, as the count of votes for each office or public question is completed, the presiding officer and at least one other election official shall collect the tally sheets, enter the totals shown on the tally sheets upon the summary sheets, add and enter the sum of the figures, and sign the summary sheets.

(B) As each summary sheet is completed, the presiding officer shall publicly announce the results.

~~(b)~~(2)(A) In towns that use vote tabulators, after the close of the polls and after all remaining absentee or transfer ballots have been fed into the vote tabulator, the presiding officer shall insert the ender card and the tabulator will print a tape of unofficial results. The presiding officer shall print at least ~~two~~ one additional ~~copies~~ copy of the tabulator tape.

(B) The unofficial results from the tape may be publicly announced, and one copy of the printed tape may be posted in the polling place upon a placard that clearly states: "Unofficial incomplete results."

~~(c) For any primary or general election:~~

~~(1)~~(3) The town clerk shall report as soon as practicable on the day of the election the unofficial vote counts of all candidates whose names appeared on the ballot to the Secretary of State. The report shall be made by electronically submitting the vote counts on the Secretary's online elections reporting system or, if unable to submit electronically, by submitting those vote counts to the Secretary of State by telephone, facsimile, or e-mail.

~~(2)~~(4) The Secretary shall ensure that any vote counts submitted by telephone, facsimile, or e-mail are entered into his or her online elections reporting system as soon as practicable after he or she receives them.

~~(3)~~(5) The Secretary's online elections reporting system shall cause the unofficial vote counts to be posted immediately on the Secretary's official website as soon as those vote counts are submitted.

~~(d)~~(6)(A) The presiding officer and one other election official then shall proceed either to complete the return at once, or to store the summary sheets in a safe and secure place until their retrieval for completion of the return. In any event, ~~no~~ not later than ~~24~~ 48 hours after the polls close, the presiding officer and at least one other election official shall transfer the totals from the summary sheets to the proper spaces on the return, and both shall sign the return.

(B) The town clerk shall store the summary sheets safely so that the public cannot reasonably have access to them for a period of 90 days without the town clerk's consent.

(C) The original of the return shall be delivered to the town clerk. In a manner prescribed by the Secretary of State and within 48 hours of the close of the polls, the town clerk shall deliver to the Secretary of State, the senatorial district clerk, the county clerk, and the representative district clerk one certified copy each of the return. The town clerk shall also make a copy available to the public upon request.

Sec. 40. 17 V.S.A. § 2590 is amended to read:

§ 2590. SECURING AND STORING BALLOTS, TALLY SHEETS, AND
CHECKLISTS

(a)(1) The presiding officer shall collect and deliver to the town clerk, securely sealed in the containers described in subsection (b) of this section, the following:

(A) packages of counted ballots;

(B) envelopes containing ballots that have been replaced and defective ballots;

(C) the exit checklist or a copy of the entrance checklist;

(D) tally sheets;

(E) in the case of a primary election, ballots from the unvoted ballot box, which shall be clearly separated from the ballots from the voted ballot box and clearly marked as unvoted ballots; and

(F) other election material shall be collected by the presiding officer and delivered to the town clerk, securely sealed in the containers provided for in subsection (b) of this section.

(2) If the material collected from one polling place is sealed in more than one container, the presiding officer shall ensure that there shall be attached to the container in which the exit checklist or copy of the entrance checklists are located a tag stating that the checklist or checklists are in that container.

(3) The form of the seal shall be designated and furnished by the ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State in sufficient quantities to each town clerk.

The ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State shall require that all seals be safely kept and fully accounted for.

(4) The following shall not be placed in a sealed container, but shall be delivered to the town clerk along with the sealed containers:

(A) ballots that were never distributed to voters;

(B) any vote tabulator memory card; and

(C) the original entrance checklist shall also be forwarded to the town clerk.

(b) The ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State shall furnish to all town clerks sufficient quantities of uniform-style containers. The ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary shall establish a method by which the outside of each container shall indicate the contents of the container, the town to which it belongs, and such other pertinent information as may be required.

(c)(1) ~~The presiding officer shall return all sealed containers to the town clerk, who shall safely store them~~ the sealed containers and shall not permit them to be removed from his or her custody or tampered with in any way.

(2)(A) In the event that a ballot bag or container breaks, splits, or opens through handling, or in the event the original entrance checklist or a vote tabulator memory card was inadvertently sealed in a ballot bag or container, the town clerk shall notify the ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State in writing, and the ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary shall order the town clerk in the presence of

two other town election officials who are not members of the same political party to open the bag to remove the entrance checklist or to move the entire contents to new bags or containers, affix new seals, and transmit the new seal numbers.

(B) Ballot bags or containers shall not be removed or tampered with in any other way, except under court order, or by order of any authorized committee of the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly.

(C) If necessary for safe storage of the containers, the town clerk may store them in a bank vault or other secure place, within or ~~without~~ outside the town, provided that access to them cannot reasonably be had without the town clerk's consent.

* * *

Sec. 41. 17 V.S.A. § 2592 is amended to read:

§ 2592. CANVASSING COMMITTEES; CANVASS OF VOTES IN
GENERAL OR SPECIAL ELECTIONS

(a) For all ~~state~~ State and national offices and statewide public questions, the ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State and the chair of the ~~state~~ State committee of each major political party (or designee) shall constitute a canvassing committee to receive and tally returns and issue certificates.

(b) For all county offices (~~except justice of the peace~~) and countywide public questions, the county clerk and the chair of the county committee of

each major political party (or designee) shall constitute a canvassing committee to receive and tally returns and issue certificates.

* * *

(k)(1) In the case of the State offices of ~~governor, lieutenant governor, treasurer, secretary of state, attorney general, and auditor of accounts~~, the canvassing committee shall prepare a certificate of election but shall not sign it.

(2) The prepared certificate shall be presented to the official canvassing committee appointed by the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly, pursuant to Chapter II, § 47 of the Constitution of the State of Vermont ~~constitution~~, for their use if they desire.

(l)(1) In the case of a tie vote, the canvassing committee shall forthwith petition the appropriate ~~superior court~~ Superior Court for a recount pursuant to section 2602 of this title.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection, either of the candidates that is involved in a tie may notify the appropriate Superior Court that he or she is withdrawing, in which case the court shall certify the other candidate as the winner.

(m)(1) Each canvassing committee shall file a report of its findings with the ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State, who shall preserve the reports as permanent records.

(2) In the case of the State offices, the State office canvassing committee shall present a copy of its report to the official canvassing committee appointed by the General Assembly pursuant to Chapter II, § 47 of the Constitution of the State of Vermont for its use if it desires.

* * * Contested Legislative Elections * * *

Sec. 42. 17 V.S.A. § 2605 is amended to read:

§ 2605. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

(a) A candidate for the office of ~~representative to the general assembly~~ Representative to the General Assembly in the general election, or any elected town officer in the representative district, or any 25 voters in the representative district may request the ~~house of representatives~~ House of Representatives to exercise its constitutional authority to judge ~~of~~ the elections and qualifications of its own members, by filing a written request with the ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State specifying the candidate or candidates whose election is being challenged. The request must be filed ~~no~~ not later than the latest of the following:

(1) 20 days after the date of the election; or

(2) 10 days after a final court judgment, if there is a recount under section 2602 of this title; ~~or~~

(3) ~~10 days after a final court judgment, if there is a contest under section 2603 of this title.~~

(b)(1) The ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State shall notify the ~~attorney general~~ Attorney General, who shall investigate the facts, take such depositions as may be necessary, prepare an opinion on the law and facts, and send his or her report and opinion to the ~~secretary of state~~ Clerk of the House at least 10 days before the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly convenes.

(2) If the Attorney General needs additional time to conduct the investigation or prepare the report and opinion required by this subsection, he or she shall alert the Clerk of the House of that need and the date by which he or she plans to submit the report and opinion.

Sec. 43. 17 V.S.A. § 2606 is amended to read:

§ 2606. SENATE

(a) A candidate for the office of ~~state senator~~ State Senator in the general election; or any 100 voters in the senatorial district may request the ~~senate~~ Senate to exercise its constitutional authority to judge ~~of~~ the elections and qualifications of its own members by filing a written request with the ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State specifying the candidate or candidates whose election is being challenged. The request must be filed ~~no~~ not later than the latest of the following:

(1) 20 days after the date of the election; or

(2) 10 days after a final court judgment, if there is a recount under section 2602 of this title; ~~or~~

~~(3) 10 days after a final court judgment, if there is a contest under section 2603 of this title.~~

(b)(1) The ~~secretary of state~~ Secretary of State shall notify the ~~attorney general~~ Attorney General, who shall investigate the facts, take such depositions as may be necessary, prepare an opinion on the law and facts, and send his or her report and opinion to the ~~secretary of the senate~~ Secretary of the Senate at least 10 days before the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly convenes.

(2) If the Attorney General needs additional time to conduct the investigation or prepare the report and opinion required by this subsection, he or she shall alert the Secretary of the Senate of that need and the date by which he or she plans to submit the report and opinion.

* * * Local Elections; Generally * * *

Sec. 44. 17 V.S.A. § 2640 is amended to read:

§ 2640. ANNUAL MEETINGS

(a) A meeting of the legal voters of each town shall be held annually on the first Tuesday of March for the election of officers and the transaction of other business, and it may be adjourned to another date. When a municipality fails to hold an annual meeting, a warning for a subsequent meeting shall be issued immediately, and at that meeting all the officers required by law may be elected and its business transacted.

(b) When a town so votes, it may thereafter start its annual meeting on any of the three days immediately preceding the first Tuesday in March at such time as it elects and may transact at that time any business not involving voting by Australian ballot or voting required by law to be by ballot and to be held on the first Tuesday in March. A meeting so started shall be adjourned until the first Tuesday in March.

(c)(1) Notwithstanding section 2508 of this title, public discussion of ballot issues and all other issues appearing in the warning, other than election of candidates, shall be permitted ~~on that day~~ at the annual meeting, regardless of the location of the polling place.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection, a candidate for local office nominated from the floor at the annual meeting may introduce his or her candidacy to the extent permitted by the voters at the meeting.

Sec. 45. 17 V.S.A. § 2650 is amended to read:

§ 2650. ADDITIONAL ~~SELECTMEN AND~~ LISTERS AND
SELECTBOARD MEMBERS

(a) Additional listers. A town may vote at a special or annual town meeting to elect ~~not more than~~ two additional listers for terms of one year each.

(b) Additional selectboard members.

(1)(A) A town may vote at a special or annual town meeting to elect ~~not more than~~ two additional ~~selectmen~~ selectboard members for terms of either one or two years each.

(B) When the terms of the additional ~~selectmen~~ selectboard members are to be for two years, the warning for the meeting shall so specify.

(2)(A) If two additional ~~selectmen~~ selectboard member positions are created, they shall be for terms of the same length, but if the terms of the new positions are to be for two years, when the additional ~~selectmen~~ selectboard members are first elected, one shall be elected for one year and the other ~~selectman~~ selectboard member for two years.

(B) Terms of these additional ~~selectmen~~ selectboard members shall end on annual meeting days. If the additional ~~selectmen~~ selectboard members are elected at a special meeting, the term of those elected for one year shall expire on the next annual meeting day and those elected for two years shall expire on the second annual meeting day following their election.

(c) Discontinuing additional listers or selectboard members.

(1) A vote establishing additional ~~selectmen or~~ listers or selectboard members shall remain in effect until the town votes to discontinue the two additional positions at an annual or special meeting duly warned for that purpose.

(2) The term of office of any lister or selectboard member in office on the date a town votes to discontinue that office shall expire on the 31st day after the vote, unless a petition for reconsideration or rescission of that vote is filed with the clerk of the municipality in accordance with section 2661 of this chapter, in which case that section shall control.

Sec. 46. 17 V.S.A. § 2652 is amended to read:

§ 2652. ROAD AND WATER COMMISSIONERS

The ~~board of selectmen~~ selectboard may and, when requested by at least five percent of the legal voters of a town at least ~~40~~ 47 days prior to the annual town meeting, ~~they~~ it shall insert in the warning for the annual town meeting an article on the question of whether ~~or not~~ the town shall elect a road commissioner or commissioners, or water commissioners, as provided in section 2651 of this ~~title~~ chapter.

Sec. 47. 17 V.S.A. § 2661 is amended to read:

§ 2661. RECONSIDERATION OR RESCISSION OF VOTE

* * *

(c) A question voted on shall not be presented for reconsideration or rescission at more than one subsequent meeting within ~~the succeeding 12 months~~ a one year period, except with the approval of the legislative body.

(d) For a vote by Australian ballot;

(1) the form of the ballot shall be as follows: “Article 1: [cite the article to be reconsidered as lastly voted].”

(2) absentee ballots for the reconsideration or rescission vote shall be sent to any voter who requested an absentee ballot for the initial vote on the article to be reconsidered or rescinded, whether or not a separate request for an absentee ballot for the reconsideration or rescission vote is submitted by the voter.

* * *

(g) This section shall not apply to nonbinding advisory articles, which shall not be subject to reconsideration or rescission.

* * * Local Elections Using the Australian Ballot System * * *

Sec. 48. 24 V.S.A. § 1755 is amended to read:

§ 1755. SUBMISSION TO VOTERS

* * *

(b) A municipal corporation may not submit to the voters more than twice ~~in the same calendar year or any 12-month~~ any one-year period the proposition of incurring a bonded debt to pay for the same or a similar public improvement, except that a proposition voted on for the first time at an annual meeting that is reconsidered may be voted on in the subsequent annual meeting.

Sec. 49. 17 V.S.A. § 2680 is amended to read:

§ 2680. AUSTRALIAN BALLOT SYSTEM; GENERAL

(a) Application. Unless specifically required by statute, the provisions of the Australian ballot system shall not apply to the annual or special meeting of a municipality unless that municipality, at its annual meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose, votes to have them apply.

* * *

(c) Budgets.

(1) A vote whether to use the Australian ballot system to establish the budget shall be in substantially the following form:

“Shall (name of municipality) adopt its (name of individual budget article) or (all budget articles) by Australian ballot?”

* * *

(g) Hearing.

(1) Whenever a municipality has voted to adopt the Australian ballot system of voting on any public question or budget, except the budget revote as provided in subsection (c) of this section, the legislative body shall hold a public informational hearing on the question by posting warnings at least 10 days in advance of the hearing in at least two public places within the municipality and in the town clerk’s office.

(2)(A) The hearing shall be held within the 10 days preceding the meeting at which the Australian ballot system is to be used. The legislative body shall be responsible for the administration of this hearing, including the preparation of minutes.

(B) ~~The~~ In a town that has voted to start its annual meeting on any of the three days immediately preceding the first Tuesday in March in accordance with subsection 2640(b) of this title, the hearing under this subsection may be held in conjunction with ~~the~~ that meeting ~~held under subsection 2640(e) of this title,~~ in which case the moderator shall preside.

Sec. 50. 17 V.S.A. § 2681 is amended to read:

§ 2681. NOMINATIONS; PETITIONS; CONSENTS

(a)(1)(A) Nominations of the municipal officers shall be by petition. The petition shall be filed with the municipal clerk, together with the endorsement, if any, of any party or parties in accordance with the provisions of this title, ~~no~~ not later than 5:00 p.m. on the sixth Monday preceding the day of the election, which shall be the filing deadline.

(B) A candidate shall be registered to vote in the town he or she is seeking office at or before the time of filing the petition.

(2) The candidate shall also file a written consent to the printing of the candidate's name on the ballot on or before the filing deadline for petitions as set forth in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(3) A petition shall contain the name of only one candidate, and the candidate's name shall appear on the petition as it does on the voter checklist. ~~A voter shall not sign more than one petition for the same office, unless more than one nomination is to be made, in which case the voter may sign as many petitions as there are nominations to be made for the same office.~~

* * *

* * * Local Election Recounts * * *

Sec. 51. 17 V.S.A. § 2683 is amended to read:

§ 2683. REQUEST FOR A RECOUNT; CANDIDATES

(a) A candidate for local office may request a recount by filing a request in writing with the municipal clerk within 10 days after the election.

(b) If the difference between the number of votes cast for a winning candidate and the number of votes cast for a losing candidate is ~~less than~~ five percent or less of the total votes cast for all the candidates for an office, divided by the number of persons to be elected, that losing candidate shall have the right to have the votes for that office recounted.

Sec. 52. 17 V.S.A. § 2685 is amended to read:

§ 2685. CONDUCT OF RECOUNT

(a)(1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, at the time and place specified by the clerk, the board of civil authority shall break the seal, open the ballot container, and recount the votes pursuant to the procedure

set forth in section 2685a of this subchapter and otherwise in the same manner as the votes were counted on the day of the election.

(2) When the ballot for the office is printed on index stock and configured to be readable by vote tabulator, the ~~presiding officer~~ town clerk and board of civil authority shall conduct the recount by vote tabulator, pursuant to the procedure set forth in chapter 51, subchapter 9 of this title to the greatest extent practicable, if:

(A) the candidate who petitions for a recount requests that it be conducted by vote tabulator;

(B) the board of civil authority, at a meeting held not less than 60 days prior to a local election and warned pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 801, has voted to require the municipality for which it is elected to use vote tabulators in subsequent recounts; or

(C) the municipality has voted to use vote tabulators in subsequent recounts pursuant to a meeting warned for the purpose.

(b) The petitioner, the opposing candidates, and their designated representatives may inspect the ballots and observe the recount under the guidance of the board.

(c) The board shall certify the result to the town clerk, who shall declare the result.

(d) After the recount, the board shall seal the ballots and other materials back in the containers and the town clerk shall safely store them as provided in section 2590 of this title.

Sec. 53. 17 V.S.A. § 2685a is amended to read:

§ 2685a. PROCEDURE FOR RECOUNT

(a) Storage of ballots; assignment of duties.

(1) The town clerk shall store all ballots, still in their sealed containers, in his or her vault until the day of the recount.

(2)(A) ~~The presiding officer~~ town clerk shall supervise the recount.

(B) If the town clerk is unavailable or is a candidate for the office subject to the recount, the board of civil authority shall appoint a voter of the municipality to perform the duties of the town clerk under this section.

(3)(A) The board of civil authority shall appoint a sufficient number of impartial assistant election officers to perform appropriate tasks ~~that are not practicable for the board of civil authority to perform~~ to conduct the recount.

(B) Each assistant election officer shall be appointed and sworn as set forth in section 2454 of this title.

(4) ~~The presiding officer shall assign members of the board of civil authority to teams of at least four persons, consisting of one caller and one observer, representing different candidates, and one tally person and one double check person, representing different candidates. Any additional team~~

~~members shall be additional observers and double check persons who shall be assigned to ensure that each candidate has one person assigned as either a caller or an observer and one person assigned as either a tally person or a double check person. One team shall be designated as the presiding officer observer team, which shall perform only the functions established under this section for that team. [Repealed.]~~

~~(5) The board of civil authority shall use fresh seals, manila tags, tally sheets, double check sheets, summary sheets for each polling place, master lists for the entire election to be recounted, and other appropriate material provided by the Secretary of State. [Repealed.]~~

(b) Preparation for recount.

(1) Before the recount begins, the ~~presiding officer~~ town clerk shall explain the recount procedures ~~which that~~ are to be followed and shall answer questions relating to such procedures.

(2) The ~~recount teams established~~ election officials shall recount the contents of one container before another container is opened and shall recount the contents of all the containers relating to one polling place before moving to those of another polling place.

~~(3) For each polling place, the number of containers shall be counted and recorded on the master list.~~

~~(4) Before opening, each container shall be inspected, and if no tag is present, replacement manila tags shall be affixed, specifying the date of election and the name of town and polling place. Likewise, each seal shall be examined to see if it is intact, and the presiding officer shall attach to any bag with a defective seal a tag stating that the seal was defective and containing the information which was contained on the defective seal.~~

~~(5) Uncounted containers shall be kept in one part of the room and moved to the other side as they are counted. Each team shall have a separate table and the presiding officer shall have a separate table, all of which tables shall be spaced apart.~~

~~(6) If there is more than one container from a polling place, the presiding officer shall open first the container which is identified as containing the checklist. Upon opening the first container in the presence of the presiding officer observer team, the presiding officer shall empty the contents onto the presiding officer's table. The presiding officer shall ensure that teams are not given unused ballots, early or absentee ballots which arrived after the close of polls, or ballots spoiled by voters and turned in by voters requesting fresh ballots.~~

~~(c) Examination of checklists.~~

~~(1) The checklist from the first bag shall be assigned to a team. The caller and observer, each acting independently, shall examine the checklist and~~

~~determine how many voters voted at the polling place, repeating the process until they agree on a number or until they agree to disagree on a number.~~

~~(2) Then the checklist shall be examined by the tally person and the double-check person, repeating the process until they agree on a number or they agree to disagree on the number.~~

~~(3) The results obtained from the two subgroups will be compared and if they do not match, the process shall be repeated until there is agreement among all the members of the team or until team members agree to disagree.~~

~~(4) The number finally determined by a majority of team members shall be submitted to the presiding officer in the presence of the presiding officer observer team, together with an indication of the nature and extent of the disagreement. If one or more team members do not agree with the number submitted, the presiding officer shall note on the master list the fact that the number of people appearing as having voted on a specified checklist was subject to dispute. [Repealed.]~~

~~(d) Sorting of ballots.~~

~~(1) Ballots from the first container shall be counted by one team and placed into piles containing 50 ballots each, except where there is a final pile which contains fewer than 50, in which case, the counting team shall affix to the top of the pile a note indicating how many ballots are contained in the pile. All of these ballots then shall be transferred to another team which shall verify~~

~~that they are in piles of 50 ballots each and that any remaining pile contains the designated number of ballots.~~

~~(2) The teams, except the presiding officer observer team and possibly the team which is processing the checklists, shall proceed to their tables and each team shall get from the presiding officer one pile of ballots, one tally sheet, and one double check sheet per 50 ballots, unless there are more persons per team who serve as double check persons, in which case, each such person shall be assigned a double check sheet. If a team spoils a tally sheet or needs to retally, it must turn in the tally sheet in order to get another one. [Repealed.]~~

(e) First tally Ballot review.

~~(1) The caller shall call the name of the person voted for and any blank or spoiled ballots. The tally person and the double check person or persons each shall make a suitable mark for that candidate and any blank or spoiled ballots.~~

~~(2) If the caller and the observer or observers election officials examining a particular ballot do not agree on how a the vote on that ballot should be counted, ~~the entire team~~ all of the election officials present shall all review the ballot vote, and if all members agree, it the vote shall be counted ~~that way~~ as agreed upon by a majority of those election officials.~~

~~(3) If one member of the entire team does not agree, that ballot shall be set aside as a questioned ballot and a copy shall be made, which copy shall be~~

~~clearly marked on its face identifying it as a copy. Such copies shall be placed on the top of the other ballots and shall remain together with the other ballots. Each original ballot deemed questionable shall be attached to a note which identifies it by town, polling place, and bag seal number. The originals of these questionable ballots shall be clipped to the summary sheet for that polling place and returned to the board of civil authority for a final decision by majority vote.~~

~~(4) After the board of civil authority has rendered a final decision on a given questionable ballot, it shall be returned to the town clerk who shall keep it in a sealed container for a period of two years.~~

~~(5)~~(2) Write-in votes for preprinted candidates shall be counted as votes for that candidate.

~~(6) If the tally persons do not agree on the number of votes for a candidate, the ballots shall be retallied until they do agree. Then the team shall notify the presiding officer that it has completed the first recount.~~

~~(f) Second tally.~~

~~(1) The presiding officer shall attach to the tally and double-check sheets a note which indicates which team members performed which functions in the first recount, and shall provide the team with a new tally sheet and an appropriate number of double-check sheets to match the number of people serving as double-check persons.~~

~~(2) The members of the team then shall switch roles, with callers and observers becoming tally persons and double-check persons, as designated by the presiding officer, and the team shall complete a second recount, following the procedures established for the first recount.~~

~~(3) When the results of the second recount match those of the first, a note shall be attached to the tally and double-check sheets, indicating which persons provided what functions during the second recount.~~

~~(4) Then the team shall take its tally sheets, double-check sheets, and ballots, plus a separate pile of questionable ballots, if any, to the presiding officer.~~

~~(5) Team members, in the presence of the presiding officer observer team, shall read the totals to the presiding officer who, in the view of these observers, shall record the totals on the summary sheet for that polling place.~~

~~(6) After a team has presented its pile of ballots to the presiding officer, it shall be assigned another pile of ballots, until all of the piles from a particular polling place have been recounted two times. [Repealed.]~~

~~(g) Completing the tally.~~

~~(1) After the totals for a polling place have been listed, the presiding officer shall add them up in the presence of the presiding officer observer team, and shall compare the number with the number of voters who voted at that polling place, according to the number obtained from the team that~~

~~examined the certified checklist. If these numbers differ, the presiding officer shall note the amount of the difference on the summary sheets for that polling place.~~

~~(2) The presiding officer shall return all ballots to the container, seal it, record the seal number on the summary sheet, write "recounted" and specify the date of the recount on the tag, and move it to the other side of the room, making sure that there is never more than one bag open at any one time.~~

~~(3) This procedure shall be repeated for each container, until the results from a polling place have been recounted, and then it shall be repeated until the results from all polling places in a town have been recounted.~~

~~(4) The presiding officer shall add the totals on each summary sheet, affix the presiding officer's seal, and send the summary sheets for all polling places together with the master list and any questionable ballots to the board of civil authority. [Repealed.]~~

(h) Other rules for conducting the recount.

(1) The ~~presiding officer~~ town clerk shall preserve order. If a person, after notice, is persistently disorderly and refuses to withdraw from the premises, the ~~presiding officer~~ town clerk may cause the person to be removed from the premises.

(2) The ~~presiding officer~~ town clerk shall designate an area within which the recount shall take place. Persons who are not board of civil authority

members or appointed impartial election officers shall be permitted to view a recount in progress, but persons not authorized by the ~~presiding officer~~ town clerk shall not be permitted within the area designated by the ~~presiding officer~~ town clerk.

~~(3) Candidates and their attorneys shall be given the opportunity to present evidence to the board of civil authority relating to the conduct of the recount. If the board determines that any violations of recount procedures have occurred and that they may have affected the outcome of the recount, a new recount shall be ordered. After such hearings or arguments as may be indicated under the circumstances, the board, within five working days, shall issue a judgment, which shall supersede any certificate of election previously issued and shall return to the town clerk questionable ballots which had been forwarded to the board.~~

(i) After the recount.

~~(1)(A) If Except as provided in subdivision (B) of this subdivision (1), if the recount results in a tie, the board of civil authority shall order a recessed election to be held, within three weeks of the recount, on a date set by the board. The only candidates who shall appear on the ballot at the recessed election shall be those who tied in the previous election. The recessed election shall be considered a separate election for the purpose of voter registration~~

~~under chapter 43 of this title~~ a runoff election shall be conducted in accordance with section 2682b of this chapter.

(B) If the recount confirms a tie, as to any public question, ~~no~~ recessed a new election shall not be held, and the question shall be certified not to have passed.

~~(C) Warnings for a recessed election shall be posted as required by this chapter, except that the warnings shall be posted not less than 10 days before the recessed election. The conduct of a recessed election shall be as provided in this chapter for local elections.~~

~~(2) The town clerk shall send a certified copy of the judgment to the Secretary of State.~~

* * * Local Office Vacancies * * *

Sec. 54. 24 V.S.A. § 963 is amended to read:

§ 963. DUTIES OF ~~SELECTPERSONS~~ SELECTBOARD; SPECIAL
MEETING

(a) When a vacancy occurs in any town office, the ~~selectpersons~~ selectboard forthwith by appointment in writing shall fill such vacancy until an election is had; except that in the event of vacancies in a majority of the selectboard at the same time, such vacancies shall be filled by a special town meeting called for that purpose.

(b) ~~Such~~ The selectboard shall file an appointment shall be filed by them
made under this section in the office of the town clerk and the town clerk shall
~~duly recorded by the town clerk~~ record it in the book of town records.

(c) If there are no ~~selectpersons~~ selectboard members in office, the
Secretary of State shall call a special election to fill any vacancies and for that
interim shall appoint and authorize the town clerk or another qualified person
to draw orders for payment of continuing obligations and necessary expenses
until the vacancies are filled.

* * * Presidential Elections * * *

Sec. 55. 17 V.S.A. § 2702 is amended to read:

§ 2702. NOMINATING PETITION

(a) The name of any person shall be printed upon the primary ballot as a
candidate for nomination by any major political party if petitions signed by at
least 1,000 voters in accordance with sections 2353, 2354, and 2358 of this
title are filed with the Secretary of State, together with the written consent of
the person to the printing of the person's name on the ballot.

(b) Petitions shall be filed not later than 5:00 p.m. on the ~~first Monday after~~
~~the first Tuesday~~ fifteenth day of January December preceding the primary
election.

(c) The petition shall be in a form prescribed by the Secretary of State.

(d) A person's name shall not be listed as a candidate on the primary ballot of more than one party in the same election.

(e) Each petition shall be accompanied by a filing fee of \$2,000.00 to be paid to the Secretary of State. However, if the petition of a candidate is accompanied by the affidavit of the candidate, which shall be available for public inspection, that the candidate and the candidate's campaign committee are without sufficient funds to pay the filing fee, the Secretary of State shall waive all but \$300.00 of the payment of the filing fee by that candidate.

Sec. 56. 17 V.S.A. § 2716 is amended to read:

§ 2716. NOTIFICATION TO SECRETARY OF STATE

Not later than 5:00 p.m. on the ~~55th~~ 65th day before the day of the general election, the chair of the State committee of each major political party shall certify in writing to the Secretary of State the names of the presidential and vice presidential nominees selected at the party's national convention.

* * * Campaign Finance * * *

Sec. 57. 17 V.S.A. § 2904 is amended to read:

§ 2904. CIVIL INVESTIGATION

(a)(1) The Attorney General or a State's Attorney, whenever he or she has reason to believe any person to be or to have been in violation of this chapter or of any rule or regulation made pursuant to this chapter, may examine or cause to be examined by any agent or representative designated by him or her

for that purpose any books, records, papers, memoranda, or physical objects of any nature bearing upon each alleged violation and may demand written responses under oath to questions bearing upon each alleged violation.

* * *

(5) Nothing in this subsection is intended to prevent the Attorney General or a State's Attorney from disclosing the results of an investigation conducted under this section, including the grounds for his or her decision as to whether to bring an enforcement action alleging a violation of this chapter or of any rule or regulation made pursuant to this chapter.

* * *

Sec. 58. 17 V.S.A. § 2973 is amended to read:

§ 2973. SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR RADIO,
TELEVISION, OR INTERNET COMMUNICATIONS

(a) In addition to the identification requirements set forth in section 2972 of this subchapter, a person, candidate, political committee, or political party that makes an expenditure for an electioneering communication shall include in any communication ~~which~~ that is transmitted through radio, television, or online video, in a clearly spoken manner, an audio statement of the name and title of the person who paid for the communication and that the person paid for the communication.

(b) If the person who paid for the communication is not a natural person, the audio statement required by this section shall include the name of that non-natural person and the name and title of the treasurer, in the case of a political committee or political party, or the principal officer in the case of the any other non-natural person.

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 59. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2017.