

Proposed Change #7: Report on Voter Verification [amend bill section]

Sec. 21a. VOTING ACCESS **AND VERIFICATION**; REPORT

On or before January 30, 2023, the Secretary of State's office shall submit a written report to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations with its findings and any recommendations for legislative action on:

(1) issues related to implementing universal vote by mail for municipal and primary elections;

(2) the impact expanding vote by mail would have on:

(A) access to voting among those who have historically been disenfranchised and populations that have historically had low voter turnout;

(B) public satisfaction with the voting process; and

(C) the administration of elections; **and**

(3) implementing a voter verification system in Vermont that will not disenfranchise voters and that will verify that ballots have been signed by a registered voter, including a report back on the time, training and cost involved in implementing the system or systems.

Proposed Change #8: Limit on ballot returns [amend bill section]

* * * Ballot Curing; Secure Drop Boxes * * *

Sec. 10. 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~~ the voter is registered, 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~~ that voter, and they shall deliver them to the town clerk.

(b) Once an early voter absentee ballot has been returned to the clerk in the envelope with the signed certificate, it shall be stored in a secure place and shall not be returned to the voter for any reason unless the ballot is deemed defective under subdivision 2546(a)(2) of this subchapter and the voter chooses to cure the defect and cast the ballot pursuant to subsection 2547(d) of this subchapter.

(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 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) to any secure ballot drop box provided by the town or city in which the voter is registered pursuant to section 2543a of this subchapter before the close of business on the day before the election;

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

~~(C)~~(D) by hand delivery to the presiding officer at the voter's polling place before the closing of the polls at 7:00 p.m.

(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.

(e) A candidate whose name appears on the ballot for that election, or a paid campaign staff member of any such candidate, may not return a ballot to the town clerk or to a secure ballot drop box, unless that candidate or paid campaign staff member:

(1) is returning the candidate's or paid campaign staff member's own ballot;

(2) is returning the ballot of an immediate family member, as defined in section 2532 of this title, including a person's spouse, children, brothers, sisters, parents, spouse's parents, grandparents, and spouse's grandparents, who has requested the candidate's or paid campaign staff member's assistance with the return of that ballot;

(3) is returning the ballot of a voter for whom the candidate or paid campaign staff member is a caretaker, and who has requested the candidate or paid campaign staff member's assistance with the return of that ballot; or

(4) is a justice of the peace performing his or her official duties pursuant to section 2538 of this title.

(f) No individual may return more than 25 ballots to the town clerk or to a secure ballot drop box.

(g) The clerk or other local election official accepting the return of ballots shall not be required to enforce the provisions of subsections (e) and (f) of this section but shall report any suspected violations to the Secretary of State's office, who shall refer them to the Attorney General's office for investigation. Individuals violating this section may be subject to penalties pursuant to section 2017 of this title.