

SENATE STATE GOVERNMENT, WAGERING, TOURISM &
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE, No. 647

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 1, 2018

The Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism and Historic Preservation Committee reports favorably Senate Committee Substitute for Senate, No. 647.

This committee substitute changes current law to enable a registered voter to vote by mail-in ballot in all future elections. The bill also provides that a person who requested a mail-in ballot for all future elections, including future general elections, will continue to receive a mail-in ballot for such elections until the person notifies the appropriate county clerk in writing that the person no longer wishes to receive such a ballot, or is no longer eligible to vote.

Current law provides that if a voter who has requested a mail-in ballot for future general elections only does not vote in the fourth general election following the general election at which the voter last voted, the county clerk will send a notice to that voter to ascertain whether he or she continues to reside at the address from which that voter is registered to vote.

The substitute also:

1) provides that a sample ballot for an election would not be mailed to any voter who has been sent a mail-in ballot for that election and whose voted ballot has been received by the county board of elections prior to the transmission of sample ballots to voters required by current law;

2) permits a county board to send an acknowledgement to a voter when his or her mail-in ballot has been received;

3) requires the Secretary of State to update the Statewide Voter Registration System to allow the postal tracking of mail-in ballots using Intelligent Mail barcodes, or a similar successor tracking system, upon the finding by the Secretary of State that such technology is viable;

4) reformats the text of the required public notice concerning the use of mail-in ballots that appears in newspapers before an election;

5) permits the clerk of each county to use an alternative mail-in ballot certification that permits the voter to certify the correctness of the identifying information contained on the label of the ballot

instead of requiring the voter to provide the voter's name and address on the certification;

6) provides that every mail-in ballot that bears a postmark date of the day of an election and that is received within 48 hours after the time of the closing of the polls for that election is to be considered valid and canvassed;

7) adds two days to the deadline by which county and State canvassers boards must meet after an election, a recount may be requested, and a petition challenging any nomination or election to elective office may be filed; and

8) provides that clerk of each county must add to the list of registered voters receiving a mail-in ballot for all future elections without further request each voter in the county who requested and received a mail-in ballot for the 2016 general election. Each voter so added would have the option to inform the clerk in writing that the voter does not wish to receive a mail-in ballot automatically for all future elections. The county clerks are to transmit to such voters a notice that he or she will automatically receive a mail-in ballot for all future elections unless the voter informs the clerk in writing that he or she does not wish to receive such a ballot.

The substitute would take effect immediately if an election is to occur more than 30 days prior to its effective date, except that if the substitute becomes operative less than 30 days before the day of an election, it would instead take effect on the day following that election.