

SENATE STATE GOVERNMENT, WAGERING, TOURISM &  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

**SENATE, No. 2819**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: AUGUST 20, 2020

The Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism and Historic Preservation Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2819.

Under current law, the county board of elections processes mail-in ballots promptly after receiving each mail-in ballot by removing the inner envelope containing the ballot from the outer envelope and comparing the signature and the information contained on the flap of the inner envelope with the signature and information contained in the respective requests for mail-in ballots. During the processing of mail-in ballots, the ballots are not removed from the inner envelopes until the canvassing of the ballots on election day.

Under the bill, a county board of elections may begin opening the inner envelopes and removing each mail-in ballot from the inner envelopes no earlier than five days prior to the day of the election. If a county board of elections begins opening the inner envelopes and removing the mail-in ballots from the inner envelopes prior to the day of the election, the county board is required to implement the measures necessary to ensure the security and secrecy of the mail-in ballots. A county board of elections is prohibited from canvassing the mail-in ballots until the opening of the polls for that election. The contents of the mail-in ballots must remain confidential in compliance with current law and regulations concerning disclosure of election results.

This bill seeks to enable county boards of elections to process mail-in ballots more quickly and to provide election results in a timelier manner. The number of mail-in ballots received by the county boards of elections are expected to increase substantially due to the COVID-19 public health crisis and Governor Murphy's Executive Order No.177 (2020), which requires the November general election to be conducted primarily via mail-in ballots.