

ASSEMBLY, No. 2419

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 7, 1996

By Assemblymen PASCRELL, DeSOPO and Steele

1 AN ACT establishing a simulated elections pilot program in the
2 Department of State.

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4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

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7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. Active participation in the electoral process is an essential civic
9 duty for all citizens who live under a democratic system of
10 government;

11 b. Learning how the electoral process works, who the candidates
12 are and how they are elected or defeated are lessons that should be
13 taught to all residents of New Jersey starting with the earliest grades
14 of formal education;

15 c. Involving young children in the electoral process creates an
16 informed citizenry, prepares them for participating in government and
17 helps to develop a lifelong habit of voting;

18 d. Simulated elections, such as those conducted under the "Kids
19 Voting USA" program, have, since 1988, been conducted in 28 states
20 and have involved thousands of students, teachers and volunteers;

21 e. Evaluations of the effects of the program have shown that
22 involvement in the elections process at an early age encourages young
23 adults to register to vote and to participate in federal and state
24 elections in greater numbers than previously; and

25 f. Establishment of a simulated elections pilot program in this
26 State, under the supervision of the Department of State and with the
27 assistance of the Commissioner of Education, could serve to stimulate
28 greater interest among children in the electoral process in New Jersey
29 and boost the number of young adults who later participate in
30 elections.

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32 2. a. There is established in the Department of State a simulated
33 elections pilot program to be administered by the Secretary of State
34 pursuant to the provisions of this act. The Commissioner of Education
35 shall assist the Secretary in the operation and administration of this
36 program. Each school district in the State may choose to participate
37 in the program for one or more elections during the period of the pilot

1 program.

2 b. The purpose of the program shall be to improve citizen
3 involvement in the electoral process by enabling students from grades
4 K through 12 to register and vote for candidates in regular elections
5 held in this State.

6 c. Whenever a school district decides to participate in the program,
7 it shall so notify the county board of elections of the county in which
8 the district is located and the Secretary of State. The county board of
9 elections of each county shall provide to each school district
10 participating in the program all of the assistance necessary to
11 effectuate the purposes of this act.

12 d. Voting under the program shall occur at the same polling places
13 used for regular elections in the participating school district, except
14 that participants in the program shall not vote by using the same voting
15 machines used to record the vote of duly registered and qualified
16 voters voting at that election. At any polling place in which such
17 voting occurs, the members of the district board shall maintain
18 authority over all election-related activities occurring thereat.

19 e. A school district that participates in the program shall be
20 responsible for all costs incurred because of that participation,
21 including all relevant costs incurred by a county board of elections.
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23 3. Notwithstanding the provisions of R.S.19:15-8, all persons
24 needed to administer a simulated election at a polling place and all
25 students participating in the pilot program in a school district shall be
26 permitted to be present in the polling place or polling room during an
27 election.
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29 4. The Secretary of State, with the assistance of the Commissioner
30 of Education, shall adopt, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure
31 Act," P.L.1968, c. 410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the rules and regulations
32 necessary to carry out the provisions of this act.
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34 5. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire on the day
35 following the second anniversary of the effective date.
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38 STATEMENT

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40 This bill establishes a simulated elections pilot program in New
41 Jersey.

42 The purpose of the program is to improve citizen involvement in the
43 electoral process by enabling students from grades K through 12 to
44 register and vote for candidates in regular elections held in this State.
45 The program would be established in the Department of State and
46 administered by the Secretary of State with the assistance of the

1 Commissioner of Education.

2 Each school district in the State may choose to participate in the
3 program for one or more elections during the period of the pilot
4 program. Any district that chooses to do so would be responsible for
5 all of the costs that it incurs because of such participation. Voting
6 would occur in the same polling place used for regular elections in the
7 school district, except that participants in the program could not vote
8 by using the same voting machines used to record the vote of duly
9 registered and qualified voters voting at that election.

10 Under the bill, the pilot program would expire on the day following
11 the second anniversary of the date that the bill became law.

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16 Establishes a simulated elections pilot program in New Jersey.