

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1217

*As Passed House
March 11, 1991*

Title: An act relating to elections.

Brief Description: Extending the voter registration period.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Wineberry, McLean, Dellwo, Jones, Wang, Riley, Pruitt and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, February 6, 1991, DP;
Passed House, March 11, 1991, 96-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
STATE GOVERNMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 10 members:
Representatives Anderson, Chair; Pruitt, Vice Chair; McLean,
Ranking Minority Member; Bowman, Assistant Ranking Minority
Member; Chandler; R. Fisher; Grant; Moyer; O'Brien; and
Sheldon.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background: State law requires that the registration files of precincts be closed against original voter registrations or transfers for 30 days immediately preceding each primary or election. At least five days before the precinct files are closed, the county auditor must publish a notice of the closing of the files.

Summary of Bill: A qualified but unregistered elector may register to vote in a primary or election after the close of the precinct registration files for that primary or election under a special registration and absentee ballot voting procedure. Such a person must register in person in the office of the county auditor or at a location designated by the auditor and must register not later than 15 days before the primary or election. The person may vote only by absentee ballot. Upon registering, the person must immediately apply for an absentee ballot. The person's registration form and absentee ballot application are to be promptly transmitted to the county auditor.

The county auditor must publish a notice regarding this special registration and absentee ballot voting procedure when the auditor announces the closing of the precinct files.

No person may vote in a precinct polling place at a primary or election unless he or she has registered to vote at least 30 days before that primary or election.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 23, 1991.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (1) The bill allows registrations to occur when the political debates are heating up, when potential voters are interested in registering to vote. (2) The bill recognizes that auditors need time to prepare poll books but provides a tool for helping to reverse the trend toward less voter participation in elections. One of the most frequently asked questions on the state's voter hotline is how to register nearer the time of an election. (3) The bill is a step toward broadening the electoral franchise.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Representative Wineberry (in favor); Sam Reed, County Auditors Association (in favor); Gary McIntosh, Office of the Secretary of State (in favor); and Jerry Sheehan, American Civil Liberties Union (in favor).