

CHAPTER 2016-37

Senate Bill No. 112

An act relating to absentee voting; amending ss. 97.012, 97.021, 97.026, 98.065, 98.077, 98.0981, 98.255, 100.025, 101.051, 101.151, 101.5612, 101.5614, 101.572, 101.591, 101.6105, 101.62, 101.64, 101.65, 101.655, 101.661, 101.662, 101.663, 101.67, 101.68, 101.69, 101.6921, 101.6923, 101.6925, 101.694, 101.6951, 101.6952, 101.697, 102.031, 102.141, 102.168, 104.047, 104.0515, 104.0616, 104.17, 117.05, 394.459, 741.406, and 916.107, F.S.; replacing the term “absentee ballot” with the term “vote-by-mail ballot”; conforming terminology to changes made by the act; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Subsection (13) of section 97.012, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

97.012 Secretary of State as chief election officer.—The Secretary of State is the chief election officer of the state, and it is his or her responsibility to:

(13) Designate an office within the department to be responsible for providing information regarding voter registration procedures and vote-by-mail absentee ballot procedures to absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters.

Section 2. Subsections (1) and (13) of section 97.021, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

97.021 Definitions.—For the purposes of this code, except where the context clearly indicates otherwise, the term:

(1) “Absent elector” means any registered and qualified voter who casts a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot.

(13) “Election costs” shall include, but not be limited to, expenditures for all paper supplies such as envelopes, instructions to voters, affidavits, reports, ballot cards, ballot booklets for vote-by-mail absentee voters, postage, notices to voters; advertisements for registration book closings, testing of voting equipment, sample ballots, and polling places; forms used to qualify candidates; polling site rental and equipment delivery and pickup; data processing time and supplies; election records retention; and labor costs, including those costs uniquely associated with vote-by-mail absentee ballot preparation, poll workers, and election night canvass.

Section 3. Section 97.026, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

97.026 Forms to be available in alternative formats and via the Internet. It is the intent of the Legislature that all forms required to be used in chapters 97-106 shall be made available upon request, in alternative formats. Such forms shall include vote-by-mail absentee ballots as alternative formats for such ballots become available and the Division of Elections is able to certify systems that provide them. Whenever possible, such forms, with the exception of vote-by-mail absentee ballots, shall be made available by the Department of State via the Internet. Sections that contain such forms include, but are not limited to, ss. 97.051, 97.052, 97.053, 97.057, 97.058, 97.0583, 97.071, 97.073, 97.1031, 98.075, 99.021, 100.361, 100.371, 101.045, 101.171, 101.20, 101.6103, 101.62, 101.64, 101.65, 101.657, 105.031, 106.023, and 106.087.

Section 4. Paragraph (c) of subsection (4) of section 98.065, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

98.065 Registration list maintenance programs.—

(4)

(c) The supervisor must designate as inactive all voters who have been sent an address confirmation final notice and who have not returned the postage prepaid, preaddressed return form within 30 days or for which the final notice has been returned as undeliverable. Names on the inactive list may not be used to calculate the number of signatures needed on any petition. A voter on the inactive list may be restored to the active list of voters upon the voter updating his or her registration, requesting a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot, or appearing to vote. However, if the voter does not update his or her voter registration information, request a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot, or vote by the second general election after being placed on the inactive list, the voter's name shall be removed from the statewide voter registration system and the voter shall be required to reregister to have his or her name restored to the statewide voter registration system.

Section 5. Subsection (4) of section 98.077, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

98.077 Update of voter signature.—

(4) All signature updates for use in verifying vote-by-mail absentee and provisional ballots must be received by the appropriate supervisor of elections no later than the start of the canvassing of vote-by-mail absentee ballots by the canvassing board. The signature on file at the start of the canvass of the vote-by-mail absentee ballots is the signature that shall be used in verifying the signature on the vote-by-mail absentee and provisional ballot certificates.

Section 6. Paragraphs (b) and (d) of subsection (1) and paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section 98.0981, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

98.0981 Reports; voting history; statewide voter registration system information; precinct-level election results; book closing statistics.—

(1) VOTING HISTORY AND STATEWIDE VOTER REGISTRATION SYSTEM INFORMATION.—

(b) After receipt of the information in paragraph (a), the department shall prepare a report in electronic format which contains the following information, separately compiled for the primary and general election for all voters qualified to vote in either election:

1. The unique identifier assigned to each qualified voter within the statewide voter registration system;

2. All information provided by each qualified voter on his or her voter registration application pursuant to s. 97.052(2), except that which is confidential or exempt from public records requirements;

3. Each qualified voter's date of registration;

4. Each qualified voter's current state representative district, state senatorial district, and congressional district, assigned by the supervisor of elections;

5. Each qualified voter's current precinct; and

6. Voting history as transmitted under paragraph (a) to include whether the qualified voter voted at a precinct location, voted during the early voting period, voted by vote-by-mail absentee ballot, attempted to vote by vote-by-mail absentee ballot that was not counted, attempted to vote by provisional ballot that was not counted, or did not vote.

(d) File specifications are as follows:

1. The file shall contain records designated by the categories below for all qualified voters who, regardless of the voter's county of residence or active or inactive registration status at the book closing for the corresponding election that the file is being created for:

a. Voted a regular ballot at a precinct location.

b. Voted at a precinct location using a provisional ballot that was subsequently counted.

c. Voted a regular ballot during the early voting period.

d. Voted during the early voting period using a provisional ballot that was subsequently counted.

e. Voted by vote-by-mail absentee ballot.

f. Attempted to vote by vote-by-mail absentee ballot, but the ballot was not counted.

g. Attempted to vote by provisional ballot, but the ballot was not counted in that election.

2. Each file shall be created or converted into a tab-delimited format.

3. File names shall adhere to the following convention:

a. Three-character county identifier as established by the department followed by an underscore.

b. Followed by four-character file type identifier of 'VH03' followed by an underscore.

c. Followed by FVRS election ID followed by an underscore.

d. Followed by Date Created followed by an underscore.

e. Date format is YYYYMMDD.

f. Followed by Time Created - HHMMSS.

g. Followed by ".txt".

4. Each record shall contain the following columns: Record Identifier, FVRS Voter ID Number, FVRS Election ID Number, Vote Date, Vote History Code, Precinct, Congressional District, House District, Senate District, County Commission District, and School Board District.

(2) PRECINCT-LEVEL ELECTION RESULTS.—

(a) Within 30 days after certification by the Elections Canvassing Commission of a presidential preference primary election, special election, primary election, or general election, the supervisors of elections shall collect and submit to the department precinct-level election results for the election in a uniform electronic format specified by paragraph (c). The precinct-level election results shall be compiled separately for the primary or special primary election that preceded the general or special general election, respectively. The results shall specifically include for each precinct the total of all ballots cast for each candidate or nominee to fill a national, state, county, or district office or proposed constitutional amendment, with subtotals for each candidate and ballot type, unless fewer than 10 voters voted a ballot type. "All ballots cast" means ballots cast by voters who cast a ballot whether at a precinct location, by vote-by-mail absentee ballot including overseas vote-by-mail absentee ballots, during the early voting period, or by provisional ballot.

Section 7. Subsection (1) of section 98.255, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

98.255 Voter education programs.—

(1) The Department of State shall adopt rules prescribing minimum standards for nonpartisan voter education. The standards shall, at a minimum, address:

- (a) Voter registration;
- (b) Balloting procedures, by mail absentee and polling place;
- (c) Voter rights and responsibilities;
- (d) Distribution of sample ballots; and
- (e) Public service announcements.

Section 8. Section 100.025, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

100.025 Citizens residing overseas; notice of elections.—A citizen of this state who is residing overseas may notify the supervisor of elections in the county where he or she is registered of his or her overseas address; and, thereafter, the supervisor shall notify such citizen at least 90 days prior to regular primary and general elections and when possible prior to any special election so that such citizen may follow the procedures for absentee voting by mail provided by law.

Section 9. Subsection (3) of section 101.051, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.051 Electors seeking assistance in casting ballots; oath to be executed; forms to be furnished.—

(3) Any elector applying to cast a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot in the office of the supervisor, in any election, who requires assistance to vote by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write may request the assistance of some person of his or her own choice, other than the elector's employer, an agent of the employer, or an officer or agent of his or her union, in casting his or her vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballot.

Section 10. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section 101.151, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.151 Specifications for ballots.—

(1)

(b) Early voting sites may employ a ballot-on-demand production system to print individual marksense ballots, including provisional ballots, for eligible electors pursuant to s. 101.657. Ballot-on-demand technology may be used to produce marksense vote-by-mail absentee and election-day ballots.

Section 11. Subsection (3) of section 101.5612, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.5612 Testing of tabulating equipment.—

(3) For electronic or electromechanical voting systems configured to tabulate vote-by-mail absentee ballots at a central or regional site, the public testing shall be conducted by processing a preaudited group of ballots so produced as to record a predetermined number of valid votes for each candidate and on each measure and to include one or more ballots for each office which have activated voting positions in excess of the number allowed by law in order to test the ability of the automatic tabulating equipment to reject such votes. If any error is detected, the cause therefor shall be corrected and an errorless count shall be made before the automatic tabulating equipment is approved. The test shall be repeated and errorless results achieved immediately before the start of the official count of the ballots and again after the completion of the official count. The programs and ballots used for testing shall be sealed and retained under the custody of the county canvassing board.

Section 12. Paragraph (a) of subsection (5) and subsections (7) and (8) of section 101.5614, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

101.5614 Canvass of returns.—

(5)(a) If any vote-by-mail absentee ballot is physically damaged so that it cannot properly be counted by the automatic tabulating equipment, a true duplicate copy shall be made of the damaged ballot in the presence of witnesses and substituted for the damaged ballot. Likewise, a duplicate ballot shall be made of a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot containing an overvoted race or a marked vote-by-mail absentee ballot in which every race is undervoted which shall include all valid votes as determined by the canvassing board based on rules adopted by the division pursuant to s. 102.166(4). All duplicate ballots shall be clearly labeled “duplicate,” bear a serial number which shall be recorded on the defective ballot, and be counted in lieu of the defective ballot. After a ballot has been duplicated, the defective ballot shall be placed in an envelope provided for that purpose, and the duplicate ballot shall be tallied with the other ballots for that precinct.

(7) Vote-by-mail ~~Absentee~~ ballots may be counted by automatic tabulating equipment if they have been marked in a manner which will enable them to be properly counted by such equipment.

(8) The return printed by the automatic tabulating equipment, to which has been added the return of write-in, vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~, and manually counted votes and votes from provisional ballots, shall constitute the official return of the election upon certification by the canvassing board. Upon completion of the count, the returns shall be open to the public. A copy of the returns may be posted at the central counting place or at the office of the

supervisor of elections in lieu of the posting of returns at individual precincts.

Section 13. Section 101.572, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.572 Public inspection of ballots.—The official ballots and ballot cards received from election boards and removed from vote-by-mail absentee ballot mailing envelopes shall be open for public inspection or examination while in the custody of the supervisor of elections or the county canvassing board at any reasonable time, under reasonable conditions; however, no persons other than the supervisor of elections or his or her employees or the county canvassing board shall handle any official ballot or ballot card. If the ballots are being examined prior to the end of the contest period in s. 102.168, the supervisor of elections shall make a reasonable effort to notify all candidates whose names appear on such ballots or ballot cards by telephone or otherwise of the time and place of the inspection or examination. All such candidates, or their representatives, shall be allowed to be present during the inspection or examination.

Section 14. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (2) of section 101.591, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

101.591 Voting system audit.—

(2)(a) A manual audit shall consist of a public manual tally of the votes cast in one randomly selected race that appears on the ballot. The tally sheet shall include election-day, vote-by-mail absentee, early voting, provisional, and overseas ballots, in at least 1 percent but no more than 2 percent of the precincts chosen at random by the county canvassing board or the local board responsible for certifying the election. If 1 percent of the precincts is less than one entire precinct, the audit shall be conducted using at least one precinct chosen at random by the county canvassing board or the local board responsible for certifying the election. Such precincts shall be selected at a publicly noticed canvassing board meeting.

(b) An automated audit shall consist of a public automated tally of the votes cast across every race that appears on the ballot. The tally sheet shall include election day, vote-by-mail absentee, early voting, provisional, and overseas ballots in at least 20 percent of the precincts chosen at random by the county canvassing board or the local board responsible for certifying the election. Such precincts shall be selected at a publicly noticed canvassing board meeting.

Section 15. Section 101.6105, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.6105 Vote-by-mail Absentee voting.—The provisions of the election code relating to vote-by-mail absentee voting and vote-by-mail absentee ballots shall apply to elections under ss. 101.6101-101.6107 only insofar as they do not conflict with the provisions of ss. 101.6101-101.6107.

Section 16. Section 101.62, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.62 Request for vote-by-mail absentee ballots.—

(1)(a) The supervisor shall accept a request for a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot from an elector in person or in writing. One request shall be deemed sufficient to receive a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot for all elections through the end of the calendar year of the second ensuing regularly scheduled general election, unless the elector or the elector's designee indicates at the time the request is made the elections for which the elector desires to receive a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot. Such request may be considered canceled when any first-class mail sent by the supervisor to the elector is returned as undeliverable.

(b) The supervisor may accept a written or telephonic request for a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot to be mailed to an elector's address on file in the Florida Voter Registration System from the elector, or, if directly instructed by the elector, a member of the elector's immediate family, or the elector's legal guardian; if the ballot is requested to be mailed to an address other than the elector's address on file in the Florida Voter Registration System, the request must be made in writing and signed by the elector. However, an absent uniformed service voter or an overseas voter seeking a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot is not required to submit a signed, written request for a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot that is being mailed to an address other than the elector's address on file in the Florida Voter Registration System. For purposes of this section, the term "immediate family" has the same meaning as specified in paragraph (4)(c). The person making the request must disclose:

1. The name of the elector for whom the ballot is requested.
2. The elector's address.
3. The elector's date of birth.
4. The requester's name.
5. The requester's address.
6. The requester's driver license number, if available.
7. The requester's relationship to the elector.
8. The requester's signature (written requests only).

(c) Upon receiving a request for a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot from an absent voter, the supervisor of elections shall notify the voter of the free access system that has been designated by the department for determining the status of his or her vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballot.

(2) A request for a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot to be mailed to a voter must be received no later than 5 p.m. on the sixth day before the election by the supervisor of elections. The supervisor of elections shall mail vote-by-

mail absentee ballots to voters requesting ballots by such deadline no later than 4 days before the election.

(3) For each request for a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot received, the supervisor shall record the date the request was made, the date the vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballot was delivered to the voter or the voter's designee or the date the vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballot was delivered to the post office or other carrier, the date the ballot was received by the supervisor, the absence of the voter's signature on the voter's certificate, if applicable, and such other information he or she may deem necessary. This information shall be provided in electronic format as provided by rule adopted by the division. The information shall be updated and made available no later than 8 a.m. of each day, including weekends, beginning 60 days before the primary until 15 days after the general election and shall be contemporaneously provided to the division. This information shall be confidential and exempt from s. 119.07(1) and shall be made available to or reproduced only for the voter requesting the ballot, a canvassing board, an election official, a political party or official thereof, a candidate who has filed qualification papers and is opposed in an upcoming election, and registered political committees for political purposes only.

(4)(a) No later than 45 days before each presidential preference primary election, primary election, and general election, the supervisor of elections shall send a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot as provided in subparagraph (c) 2. to each absent uniformed services voter and to each overseas voter who has requested a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot.

(b) The supervisor of elections shall mail a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot to each absent qualified voter, other than those listed in paragraph (a), who has requested such a ballot, between the 35th and 28th days before the presidential preference primary election, primary election, and general election. Except as otherwise provided in subsection (2) and after the period described in this paragraph, the supervisor shall mail vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballots within 2 business days after receiving a request for such a ballot.

(c) The supervisor shall provide a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot to each elector by whom a request for that ballot has been made by one of the following means:

1. By nonforwardable, return-if-undeliverable mail to the elector's current mailing address on file with the supervisor or any other address the elector specifies in the request.

2. By forwardable mail, e-mail, or facsimile machine transmission to absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters. The absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter may designate in the vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballot request the preferred method of transmission. If the voter does not designate the method of transmission, the vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballot shall be mailed.

3. By personal delivery before 7 p.m. on election day to the elector, upon presentation of the identification required in s. 101.043.

4. By delivery to a designee on election day or up to 5 days prior to the day of an election. Any elector may designate in writing a person to pick up the ballot for the elector; however, the person designated may not pick up more than two vote-by-mail absentee ballots per election, other than the designee's own ballot, except that additional ballots may be picked up for members of the designee's immediate family. For purposes of this section, "immediate family" means the designee's spouse or the parent, child, grandparent, or sibling of the designee or of the designee's spouse. The designee shall provide to the supervisor the written authorization by the elector and a picture identification of the designee and must complete an affidavit. The designee shall state in the affidavit that the designee is authorized by the elector to pick up that ballot and shall indicate if the elector is a member of the designee's immediate family and, if so, the relationship. The department shall prescribe the form of the affidavit. If the supervisor is satisfied that the designee is authorized to pick up the ballot and that the signature of the elector on the written authorization matches the signature of the elector on file, the supervisor shall give the ballot to that designee for delivery to the elector.

5. Except as provided in s. 101.655, the supervisor may not deliver a vote-by-mail absentee ballot to an elector or an elector's immediate family member on the day of the election unless there is an emergency, to the extent that the elector will be unable to go to his or her assigned polling place. If a vote-by-mail absentee ballot is delivered, the elector or his or her designee shall execute an affidavit affirming to the facts which allow for delivery of the vote-by-mail absentee ballot. The department shall adopt a rule providing for the form of the affidavit.

(5) If the department is unable to certify candidates for an election in time to comply with paragraph (4)(a), the Department of State is authorized to prescribe rules for a ballot to be sent to absent uniformed services voters and overseas voters.

(6) ~~Only~~ Nothing other than the materials necessary to vote by mail may ~~absentee~~ shall be mailed or delivered with any vote-by-mail absentee ballot.

Section 17. Subsections (1) and (4) of section 101.64, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

101.64 Delivery of vote-by-mail absentee ballots; envelopes; form.—

(1) The supervisor shall enclose with each vote-by-mail absentee ballot two envelopes: a secrecy envelope, into which the absent elector shall enclose his or her marked ballot; and a mailing envelope, into which the absent elector shall then place the secrecy envelope, which shall be addressed to the supervisor and also bear on the back side a certificate in substantially the following form:

Note: Please Read Instructions Carefully Before
Marking Ballot and Completing Voter’s Certificate.

VOTER’S CERTIFICATE

I,, do solemnly swear or affirm that I am a qualified and registered voter of County, Florida, and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I understand that if I commit or attempt to commit any fraud in connection with voting, vote a fraudulent ballot, or vote more than once in an election, I can be convicted of a felony of the third degree and fined up to \$5,000 and/or imprisoned for up to 5 years. I also understand that failure to sign this certificate will invalidate my ballot.

...(Date)...

...(Voter’s Signature)...

(4) The supervisor shall mark, code, indicate on, or otherwise track the precinct of the absent elector for each vote-by-mail absentee ballot.

Section 18. Section 101.65, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.65 Instructions to absent electors.—The supervisor shall enclose with each vote-by-mail absentee ballot separate printed instructions in substantially the following form:

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY
BEFORE MARKING BALLOT.

1. VERY IMPORTANT. In order to ensure that your vote-by-mail absentee ballot will be counted, it should be completed and returned as soon as possible so that it can reach the supervisor of elections of the county in which your precinct is located no later than 7 p.m. on the day of the election. However, if you are an overseas voter casting a ballot in a presidential preference primary or general election, your vote-by-mail absentee ballot must be postmarked or dated no later than the date of the election and received by the supervisor of elections of the county in which you are registered to vote no later than 10 days after the date of the election.

2. Mark your ballot in secret as instructed on the ballot. You must mark your own ballot unless you are unable to do so because of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write.

3. Mark only the number of candidates or issue choices for a race as indicated on the ballot. If you are allowed to “Vote for One” candidate and you vote for more than one candidate, your vote in that race will not be counted.

4. Place your marked ballot in the enclosed secrecy envelope.

5. Insert the secrecy envelope into the enclosed mailing envelope which is addressed to the supervisor.

6. Seal the mailing envelope and completely fill out the Voter's Certificate on the back of the mailing envelope.

7. **VERY IMPORTANT.** In order for your vote-by-mail absentee ballot to be counted, you must sign your name on the line above (Voter's Signature). A vote-by-mail An absentee ballot will be considered illegal and not be counted if the signature on the voter's certificate does not match the signature on record. The signature on file at the start of the canvass of the vote-by-mail absentee ballots is the signature that will be used to verify your signature on the voter's certificate. If you need to update your signature for this election, send your signature update on a voter registration application to your supervisor of elections so that it is received no later than the start of the canvassing of vote-by-mail absentee ballots, which occurs no earlier than the 15th day before election day.

8. **VERY IMPORTANT.** If you are an overseas voter, you must include the date you signed the Voter's Certificate on the line above (Date) or your ballot may not be counted.

9. Mail, deliver, or have delivered the completed mailing envelope. Be sure there is sufficient postage if mailed.

10. **FELONY NOTICE.** It is a felony under Florida law to accept any gift, payment, or gratuity in exchange for your vote for a candidate. It is also a felony under Florida law to vote in an election using a false identity or false address, or under any other circumstances making your ballot false or fraudulent.

Section 19. Subsections (1) and (2) of section 101.655, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

101.655 Supervised voting by absent electors in certain facilities.—

(1) The supervisor of elections of a county shall provide supervised voting for absent electors residing in any assisted living facility, as defined in s. 429.02, or nursing home facility, as defined in s. 400.021, within that county at the request of any administrator of such a facility. Such request for supervised voting in the facility shall be made by submitting a written request to the supervisor of elections no later than 21 days prior to the election for which that request is submitted. The request shall specify the name and address of the facility and the name of the electors who wish to vote by mail absentee in that election. If the request contains the names of fewer than five voters, the supervisor of elections is not required to provide supervised voting.

(2) The supervisor of elections may, in the absence of a request from the administrator of a facility, provide for supervised voting in the facility for those persons who have requested vote-by-mail absentee ballots. The

supervisor of elections shall notify the administrator of the facility that supervised voting will occur.

Section 20. Section 101.661, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.661 Voting vote-by-mail absentee ballots.—All electors must personally mark or designate their choices on the vote-by-mail absentee ballot, except:

(1) Electors who require assistance to vote because of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write, who may have some person of the elector's choice, other than the elector's employer, an agent of the employer, or an officer or agent of the elector's union, mark the elector's choices or assist the elector in marking his or her choices on the ballot.

(2) As otherwise provided in s. 101.051 or s. 101.655.

Section 21. Section 101.662, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.662 Accessibility of vote-by-mail absentee ballots.—It is the intent of the Legislature that voting by vote-by-mail absentee ballot be by methods that are fully accessible to all voters, including voters having a disability. The Department of State shall work with the supervisors of elections and the disability community to develop and implement procedures and technologies, as possible, which will include procedures for providing vote-by-mail absentee ballots, upon request, in alternative formats that will allow all voters to cast a secret, independent, and verifiable vote-by-mail absentee ballot without the assistance of another person.

Section 22. Section 101.663, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.663 Electors; change of residence to another state.—An elector registered in this state who moves his or her permanent residence to another state after the registration books in that state have closed ~~is shall be~~ permitted to vote by mail absentee in the county of his or her former residence for the offices of President and Vice President of the United States.

Section 23. Section 101.67, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.67 Safekeeping of mailed ballots; deadline for receiving vote-by-mail absentee ballots.—

(1) The supervisor of elections shall safely keep in his or her office any envelopes received containing marked ballots of absent electors, and he or she shall, before the canvassing of the election returns, deliver the envelopes to the county canvassing board along with his or her file or list kept regarding said ballots.

(2) Except as provided in s. 101.6952(5), all marked absent electors' ballots to be counted must be received by the supervisor by 7 p.m. the day of

the election. All ballots received thereafter shall be marked with the time and date of receipt and filed in the supervisor's office.

Section 24. Section 101.68, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.68 Canvassing of vote-by-mail absentee ballot.—

(1) The supervisor of the county where the absent elector resides shall receive the voted ballot, at which time the supervisor shall compare the signature of the elector on the voter's certificate with the signature of the elector in the registration books or the precinct register to determine whether the elector is duly registered in the county and may record on the elector's registration certificate that the elector has voted. However, effective July 1, 2005, an elector who dies after casting a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot but on or before election day shall remain listed in the registration books until the results have been certified for the election in which the ballot was cast. The supervisor shall safely keep the ballot unopened in his or her office until the county canvassing board canvasses the vote. Except as provided in subsection (4), after a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot is received by the supervisor, the ballot is deemed to have been cast, and changes or additions may not be made to the voter's certificate.

(2)(a) The county canvassing board may begin the canvassing of vote-by-mail absentee ballots at 7 a.m. on the 15th day before the election, but not later than noon on the day following the election. In addition, for any county using electronic tabulating equipment, the processing of vote-by-mail absentee ballots through such tabulating equipment may begin at 7 a.m. on the 15th day before the election. However, notwithstanding any such authorization to begin canvassing or otherwise processing vote-by-mail absentee ballots early, no result shall be released until after the closing of the polls in that county on election day. Any supervisor of elections, deputy supervisor of elections, canvassing board member, election board member, or election employee who releases the results of a canvassing or processing of vote-by-mail absentee ballots prior to the closing of the polls in that county on election day commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

(b) To ensure that all vote-by-mail absentee ballots to be counted by the canvassing board are accounted for, the canvassing board shall compare the number of ballots in its possession with the number of requests for ballots received to be counted according to the supervisor's file or list.

(c)1. The canvassing board shall, if the supervisor has not already done so, compare the signature of the elector on the voter's certificate or on the vote-by-mail absentee ballot affidavit as provided in subsection (4) with the signature of the elector in the registration books or the precinct register to see that the elector is duly registered in the county and to determine the legality of that vote-by-mail absentee ballot. The ballot of an elector who casts a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot shall be counted even if the elector dies on or before election day, as long as, prior to the death of the voter, the

ballot was postmarked by the United States Postal Service, date-stamped with a verifiable tracking number by a common carrier, or already in the possession of the supervisor of elections. A vote-by-mail absentee ballot is shall be considered illegal if the voter's certificate or vote-by-mail absentee ballot affidavit does not include the signature of the elector, as shown by the registration records or the precinct register. However, a vote-by-mail an absentee ballot is not considered illegal if the signature of the elector does not cross the seal of the mailing envelope. If the canvassing board determines that any ballot is illegal, a member of the board shall, without opening the envelope, mark across the face of the envelope: "rejected as illegal." The vote-by-mail absentee ballot affidavit, if applicable, the envelope, and the ballot contained therein shall be preserved in the manner that official ballots voted are preserved.

2. If any elector or candidate present believes that a vote-by-mail an absentee ballot is illegal due to a defect apparent on the voter's certificate or the vote-by-mail absentee ballot affidavit, he or she may, at any time before the ballot is removed from the envelope, file with the canvassing board a protest against the canvass of that ballot, specifying the precinct, the ballot, and the reason he or she believes the ballot to be illegal. A challenge based upon a defect in the voter's certificate or vote-by-mail absentee ballot affidavit may not be accepted after the ballot has been removed from the mailing envelope.

(d) The canvassing board shall record the ballot upon the proper record, unless the ballot has been previously recorded by the supervisor. The mailing envelopes shall be opened and the secrecy envelopes shall be mixed so as to make it impossible to determine which secrecy envelope came out of which signed mailing envelope; however, in any county in which an electronic or electromechanical voting system is used, the ballots may be sorted by ballot styles and the mailing envelopes may be opened and the secrecy envelopes mixed separately for each ballot style. The votes on vote-by-mail absentee ballots shall be included in the total vote of the county.

(3) The supervisor or the chair of the county canvassing board shall, after the board convenes, have custody of the vote-by-mail absentee ballots until a final proclamation is made as to the total vote received by each candidate.

(4)(a) The supervisor of elections shall, on behalf of the county canvassing board, notify each elector whose ballot was rejected as illegal and provide the specific reason the ballot was rejected. The supervisor shall mail a voter registration application to the elector to be completed indicating the elector's current signature if the elector's ballot was rejected due to a difference between the elector's signature on the voter's certificate or vote-by-mail absentee ballot affidavit and the elector's signature in the registration books or precinct register. This section does not prohibit the supervisor from providing additional methods for updating an elector's signature.

(b) Until 5 p.m. on the day before an election, the supervisor shall allow an elector who has returned a vote-by-mail an absentee ballot that does not

include the elector’s signature to complete and submit an affidavit in order to cure the unsigned vote-by-mail absentee ballot.

(c) The elector shall provide identification to the supervisor and must complete a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot affidavit in substantially the following form:

VOTE-BY-MAIL ABSENTEE BALLOT AFFIDAVIT

I,, am a qualified voter in this election and registered voter of County, Florida. I do solemnly swear or affirm that I requested and returned the vote-by-mail absentee ballot and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I understand that if I commit or attempt any fraud in connection with voting, vote a fraudulent ballot, or vote more than once in an election, I may be convicted of a felony of the third degree and fined up to \$5,000 and imprisoned for up to 5 years. I understand that my failure to sign this affidavit means that my vote-by-mail absentee ballot will be invalidated.

...(Voter’s Signature)...

...(Address)...

(d) Instructions must accompany the vote-by-mail absentee ballot affidavit in substantially the following form:

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THE AFFIDAVIT. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR BALLOT NOT TO COUNT.

1. In order to ensure that your vote-by-mail absentee ballot will be counted, your affidavit should be completed and returned as soon as possible so that it can reach the supervisor of elections of the county in which your precinct is located no later than 5 p.m. on the 2nd day before the election.
2. You must sign your name on the line above (Voter’s Signature).
3. You must make a copy of one of the following forms of identification:
 - a. Identification that includes your name and photograph: United States passport; debit or credit card; military identification; student identification; retirement center identification; neighborhood association identification; or public assistance identification; or

b. Identification that shows your name and current residence address: current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document (excluding voter identification card).

4. Place the envelope bearing the affidavit into a mailing envelope addressed to the supervisor. Insert a copy of your identification in the mailing envelope. Mail, deliver, or have delivered the completed affidavit along with the copy of your identification to your county supervisor of elections. Be sure there is sufficient postage if mailed and that the supervisor's address is correct.

5. Alternatively, you may fax or e-mail your completed affidavit and a copy of your identification to the supervisor of elections. If e-mailing, please provide these documents as attachments.

(e) The department and each supervisor shall include the affidavit and instructions on their respective websites. The supervisor must include his or her office's mailing address, e-mail address, and fax number on the page containing the affidavit instructions; the department's instruction page must include the office mailing addresses, e-mail addresses, and fax numbers of all supervisors of elections or provide a conspicuous link to such addresses.

(f) The supervisor shall attach each affidavit received to the appropriate vote-by-mail absentee ballot mailing envelope.

Section 25. Section 101.69, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.69 Voting in person; return of vote-by-mail absentee ballot.—The provisions of this code shall not be construed to prohibit any elector from voting in person at the elector's precinct on the day of an election or at an early voting site, notwithstanding that the elector has requested a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot for that election. An elector who has returned a voted vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballot to the supervisor, however, is deemed to have cast his or her ballot and is not entitled to vote another ballot or to have a provisional ballot counted by the county canvassing board. An elector who has received a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot and has not returned the voted ballot to the supervisor, but desires to vote in person, shall return the ballot, whether voted or not, to the election board in the elector's precinct or to an early voting site. The returned ballot shall be marked "canceled" by the board and placed with other canceled ballots. However, if the elector does not return the ballot and the election official:

(1) Confirms that the supervisor has received the elector's vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballot, the elector shall not be allowed to vote in person. If the elector maintains that he or she has not returned the vote-by-mail absentee ballot or remains eligible to vote, the elector shall be provided a provisional ballot as provided in s. 101.048.

(2) Confirms that the supervisor has not received the elector's vote-by-mail absentee ballot, the elector shall be allowed to vote in person as provided in this code. The elector's vote-by-mail absentee ballot, if subsequently received, shall not be counted and shall remain in the mailing envelope, and the envelope shall be marked "Rejected as Illegal."

(3) Cannot determine whether the supervisor has received the elector's vote-by-mail absentee ballot, the elector may vote a provisional ballot as provided in s. 101.048.

Section 26. Subsections (1) and (2) of section 101.6921, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

101.6921 Delivery of special vote-by-mail absentee ballot to certain first-time voters.—

(1) The provisions of this section apply to voters who are subject to the provisions of s. 97.0535 and who have not provided the identification or certification required by s. 97.0535 by the time the vote-by-mail absentee ballot is mailed.

(2) The supervisor shall enclose with each vote-by-mail absentee ballot three envelopes: a secrecy envelope, into which the absent elector will enclose his or her marked ballot; an envelope containing the Voter's Certificate, into which the absent elector shall place the secrecy envelope; and a mailing envelope, which shall be addressed to the supervisor and into which the absent elector will place the envelope containing the Voter's Certificate and a copy of the required identification.

Section 27. Section 101.6923, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.6923 Special vote-by-mail absentee ballot instructions for certain first-time voters.—

(1) The provisions of this section apply to voters who are subject to the provisions of s. 97.0535 and who have not provided the identification or information required by s. 97.0535 by the time the vote-by-mail absentee ballot is mailed.

(2) A voter covered by this section shall be provided with printed instructions with his or her vote-by-mail absentee ballot in substantially the following form:

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE MARKING YOUR BALLOT. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS MAY CAUSE YOUR BALLOT NOT TO COUNT.

1. In order to ensure that your vote-by-mail absentee ballot will be counted, it should be completed and returned as soon as possible so that it can reach the supervisor of elections of the county in which your precinct is

located no later than 7 p.m. on the date of the election. However, if you are an overseas voter casting a ballot in a presidential preference primary or general election, your vote-by-mail absentee ballot must be postmarked or dated no later than the date of the election and received by the supervisor of elections of the county in which you are registered to vote no later than 10 days after the date of the election.

2. Mark your ballot in secret as instructed on the ballot. You must mark your own ballot unless you are unable to do so because of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write.

3. Mark only the number of candidates or issue choices for a race as indicated on the ballot. If you are allowed to “Vote for One” candidate and you vote for more than one, your vote in that race will not be counted.

4. Place your marked ballot in the enclosed secrecy envelope and seal the envelope.

5. Insert the secrecy envelope into the enclosed envelope bearing the Voter’s Certificate. Seal the envelope and completely fill out the Voter’s Certificate on the back of the envelope.

a. You must sign your name on the line above (Voter’s Signature).

b. If you are an overseas voter, you must include the date you signed the Voter’s Certificate on the line above (Date) or your ballot may not be counted.

c. A vote-by-mail ~~An absentee~~ ballot will be considered illegal and will not be counted if the signature on the Voter’s Certificate does not match the signature on record. The signature on file at the start of the canvass of the vote-by-mail absentee ballots is the signature that will be used to verify your signature on the Voter’s Certificate. If you need to update your signature for this election, send your signature update on a voter registration application to your supervisor of elections so that it is received no later than the start of canvassing of vote-by-mail absentee ballots, which occurs no earlier than the 15th day before election day.

6. Unless you meet one of the exemptions in Item 7., you must make a copy of one of the following forms of identification:

a. Identification which must include your name and photograph: United States passport; debit or credit card; military identification; student identification; retirement center identification; neighborhood association identification; or public assistance identification; or

b. Identification which shows your name and current residence address: current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document (excluding voter identification card).

7. The identification requirements of Item 6. do not apply if you meet one of the following requirements:

- a. You are 65 years of age or older.
 - b. You have a temporary or permanent physical disability.
 - c. You are a member of a uniformed service on active duty who, by reason of such active duty, will be absent from the county on election day.
 - d. You are a member of the Merchant Marine who, by reason of service in the Merchant Marine, will be absent from the county on election day.
 - e. You are the spouse or dependent of a member referred to in paragraph c. or paragraph d. who, by reason of the active duty or service of the member, will be absent from the county on election day.
 - f. You are currently residing outside the United States.
8. Place the envelope bearing the Voter's Certificate into the mailing envelope addressed to the supervisor. Insert a copy of your identification in the mailing envelope. **DO NOT PUT YOUR IDENTIFICATION INSIDE THE SECRECY ENVELOPE WITH THE BALLOT OR INSIDE THE ENVELOPE WHICH BEARS THE VOTER'S CERTIFICATE OR YOUR BALLOT WILL NOT COUNT.**
9. Mail, deliver, or have delivered the completed mailing envelope. Be sure there is sufficient postage if mailed.
10. **FELONY NOTICE.** It is a felony under Florida law to accept any gift, payment, or gratuity in exchange for your vote for a candidate. It is also a felony under Florida law to vote in an election using a false identity or false address, or under any other circumstances making your ballot false or fraudulent.

Section 28. Subsections (1) and (2) of section 101.6925, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

101.6925 Canvassing special vote-by-mail absentee ballots.—

(1) The supervisor of the county where the absent elector resides shall receive the voted special vote-by-mail absentee ballot, at which time the mailing envelope shall be opened to determine if the voter has enclosed the identification required or has indicated on the Voter's Certificate that he or she is exempt from the identification requirements.

(2) If the identification is enclosed or the voter has indicated that he or she is exempt from the identification requirements, the supervisor shall make the note on the registration records of the voter and proceed to canvass the vote-by-mail absentee ballot as provided in s. 101.68.

Section 29. Section 101.694, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.694 Mailing of ballots upon receipt of federal postcard application.

(1) Upon receipt of a federal postcard application for a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot executed by a person whose registration is in order or whose application is sufficient to register or update the registration of that person, the supervisor shall send the ballot in accordance with s. 101.62(4).

(2) Upon receipt of a federal postcard application for a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot executed by a person whose registration is not in order and whose application is insufficient to register or update the registration of that person, the supervisor shall follow the procedure set forth in s. 97.073.

(3) Vote-by-mail Absentee envelopes printed for voters entitled to vote by mail ~~absentee~~ under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act shall meet the specifications as determined by the Federal Voting Assistance Program of the United States Department of Defense and the United States Postal Service.

(4) Cognizance shall be taken of the fact that vote-by-mail absentee ballots and other materials such as instructions and envelopes are to be carried via air mail, and, to the maximum extent possible, such ballots and materials shall be reduced in size and weight of paper. The same ballot shall be used, however, as is used by other vote-by-mail absentee voters.

Section 30. Subsections (1) and (4) of section 101.6951, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

101.6951 State write-in vote-by-mail ballot.—

(1) An overseas voter may request, not earlier than 180 days before a general election, a state write-in vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballot from the supervisor of elections in the county of registration. In order to receive a state write-in ballot, the voter shall state that due to military or other contingencies that preclude normal mail delivery, the voter cannot vote a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot during the normal vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ voting period. State write-in vote-by-mail ~~absentee~~ ballots shall be made available to voters 90 to 180 days prior to a general election. The Department of State shall prescribe by rule the form of the state write-in vote-by-mail ballot.

(4) The state write-in vote-by-mail ballot shall contain all offices, federal, state, and local, for which the voter would otherwise be entitled to vote.

Section 31. Section 101.6952, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.6952 Vote-by-mail Absentee ballots for absent uniformed services and overseas voters.—

(1) If an absent uniformed services voter's or an overseas voter's request for an official vote-by-mail absentee ballot pursuant to s. 101.62 includes an e-mail address, the supervisor of elections shall:

(a) Record the voter's e-mail address in the vote-by-mail absentee ballot record;

(b) Confirm by e-mail that the vote-by-mail absentee ballot request was received and include in that e-mail the estimated date the vote-by-mail absentee ballot will be sent to the voter; and

(c) Notify the voter by e-mail when the voted vote-by-mail absentee ballot is received by the supervisor of elections.

(2)(a) An absent uniformed services voter or an overseas voter who makes timely application for but does not receive an official vote-by-mail absentee ballot may use the federal write-in absentee ballot to vote in any federal, state, or local election.

(b)1. In an election for federal office, an elector may designate a candidate by writing the name of a candidate on the ballot. Except for a primary or special primary election, the elector may alternatively designate a candidate by writing the name of a political party on the ballot. A written designation of the political party shall be counted as a vote for the candidate of that party if there is such a party candidate in the race.

2. In a state or local election, an elector may vote in the section of the federal write-in absentee ballot designated for nonfederal races by writing on the ballot the title of each office and by writing on the ballot the name of the candidate for whom the elector is voting. Except for a primary, special primary, or nonpartisan election, the elector may alternatively designate a candidate by writing the name of a political party on the ballot. A written designation of the political party shall be counted as a vote for the candidate of that party if there is such a party candidate in the race. In addition, the elector may vote on any ballot measure presented in such election by identifying the ballot measure on which he or she desires to vote and specifying his or her vote on the measure. For purposes of this section, a vote cast in a judicial merit retention election shall be treated in the same manner as a ballot measure in which the only allowable responses are "Yes" or "No."

(c) In the case of a joint candidacy, such as for the offices of President/Vice President or Governor/Lieutenant Governor, a valid vote for one or both qualified candidates on the same ticket shall constitute a vote for the joint candidacy.

(d) For purposes of this subsection and except when the context clearly indicates otherwise, such as when a candidate in the election is affiliated with a political party whose name includes the word "Independent," "Independence," or a similar term, a voter designation of "No Party Affiliation" or "Independent," or any minor variation, misspelling, or abbreviation thereof, shall be considered a designation for the candidate, other than a write-in candidate, who qualified to run in the race with no party affiliation. If more than one candidate qualifies to run as a candidate

with no party affiliation, the designation may not count for any candidate unless there is a valid, additional designation of the candidate's name.

(e) Any abbreviation, misspelling, or other minor variation in the form of the name of an office, the name of a candidate, the ballot measure, or the name of a political party must be disregarded in determining the validity of the ballot.

(3)(a) An absent uniformed services voter or an overseas voter who submits a federal write-in absentee ballot and later receives an official vote-by-mail absentee ballot may submit the official vote-by-mail absentee ballot. An elector who submits a federal write-in absentee ballot and later receives and submits an official vote-by-mail absentee ballot should make every reasonable effort to inform the appropriate supervisor of elections that the elector has submitted more than one ballot.

(b) A federal write-in absentee ballot may not be canvassed until 7 p.m. on the day of the election. A federal write-in absentee ballot from an overseas voter in a presidential preference primary or general election may not be canvassed until the conclusion of the 10-day period specified in subsection (5). Each federal write-in absentee ballot received by 7 p.m. on the day of the election shall be canvassed pursuant to ss. 101.5614(5) and 101.68, unless the elector's official vote-by-mail absentee ballot is received by 7 p.m. on election day. Each federal write-in absentee ballot from an overseas voter in a presidential preference primary or general election received by 10 days after the date of the election shall be canvassed pursuant to ss. 101.5614(5) and 101.68, unless the overseas voter's official vote-by-mail absentee ballot is received by 10 days after the date of the election. If the elector's official vote-by-mail absentee ballot is received by 7 p.m. on election day, or, for an overseas voter in a presidential preference primary or general election, no later than 10 days after the date of the election, the federal write-in absentee ballot is invalid and the official vote-by-mail absentee ballot shall be canvassed. The time shall be regulated by the customary time in standard use in the county seat of the locality.

(4) For vote-by-mail absentee ballots received from absent uniformed services voters or overseas voters, there is a presumption that the envelope was mailed on the date stated on the outside of the return envelope, regardless of the absence of a postmark on the mailed envelope or the existence of a postmark date that is later than the date of the election.

(5) A vote-by-mail ~~An~~ absentee ballot from an overseas voter in any presidential preference primary or general election which is postmarked or dated no later than the date of the election and is received by the supervisor of elections of the county in which the overseas voter is registered no later than 10 days after the date of the election shall be counted as long as the vote-by-mail absentee ballot is otherwise proper.

Section 32. Section 101.697, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.697 Electronic transmission of election materials.—The Department of State shall determine whether secure electronic means can be established for receiving ballots from overseas voters. If such security can be established, the department shall adopt rules to authorize a supervisor of elections to accept from an overseas voter a request for a vote-by-mail absentee ballot or a voted vote-by-mail absentee ballot by secure facsimile machine transmission or other secure electronic means. The rules must provide that in order to accept a voted ballot, the verification of the voter must be established, the security of the transmission must be established, and each ballot received must be recorded.

Section 33. Paragraph (a) of subsection (4) of section 102.031, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

102.031 Maintenance of good order at polls; authorities; persons allowed in polling rooms and early voting areas; unlawful solicitation of voters.—

(4)(a) No person, political committee, or other group or organization may solicit voters inside the polling place or within 100 feet of the entrance to any polling place, a polling room where the polling place is also a polling room, an early voting site, or an office of the supervisor of elections where vote-by-mail absentee ballots are requested and printed on demand for the convenience of electors who appear in person to request them. Before the opening of the polling place or early voting site, the clerk or supervisor shall designate the no-solicitation zone and mark the boundaries.

Section 34. Subsections (2), (3), and (4) of section 102.141, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

102.141 County canvassing board; duties.—

(2) The county canvassing board shall meet in a building accessible to the public in the county where the election occurred at a time and place to be designated by the supervisor of elections to publicly canvass the absent ~~absentee~~ electors' ballots as provided for in s. 101.68 and provisional ballots as provided by ss. 101.048, 101.049, and 101.6925. Provisional ballots cast pursuant to s. 101.049 shall be canvassed in a manner that votes for candidates and issues on those ballots can be segregated from other votes. Public notice of the time and place at which the county canvassing board shall meet to canvass the absent ~~absentee~~ electors' ballots and provisional ballots shall be given at least 48 hours prior thereto by publication on the supervisor of elections' website and once in one or more newspapers of general circulation in the county or, if there is no newspaper of general circulation in the county, by posting such notice in at least four conspicuous places in the county. As soon as the absent ~~absentee~~ electors' ballots and the provisional ballots are canvassed, the board shall proceed to publicly canvass the vote given each candidate, nominee, constitutional amendment, or other measure submitted to the electorate of the county, as shown by the returns then on file in the office of the supervisor of elections.

(3) The canvass, except the canvass of absent absentee electors' returns and the canvass of provisional ballots, shall be made from the returns and certificates of the inspectors as signed and filed by them with the supervisor, and the county canvassing board shall not change the number of votes cast for a candidate, nominee, constitutional amendment, or other measure submitted to the electorate of the county, respectively, in any polling place, as shown by the returns. All returns shall be made to the board on or before 2 a.m. of the day following any primary, general, or other election. If the returns from any precinct are missing, if there are any omissions on the returns from any precinct, or if there is an obvious error on any such returns, the canvassing board shall order a retabulation of the returns from such precinct. Before canvassing such returns, the canvassing board shall examine the tabulation of the ballots cast in such precinct and determine whether the returns correctly reflect the votes cast. If there is a discrepancy between the returns and the tabulation of the ballots cast, the tabulation of the ballots cast shall be presumed correct and such votes shall be canvassed accordingly.

(4)(a) The supervisor of elections shall upload into the county's election management system by 7 p.m. on the day before the election the results of all early voting and vote-by-mail absentee ballots that have been canvassed and tabulated by the end of the early voting period. Pursuant to ss. 101.5614(9), 101.657, and 101.68(2), the tabulation of votes cast or the results of such uploads may not be made public before the close of the polls on election day.

(b) The canvassing board shall report all early voting and all tabulated vote-by-mail absentee results to the Department of State within 30 minutes after the polls close. Thereafter, the canvassing board shall report, with the exception of provisional ballot results, updated precinct election results to the department at least every 45 minutes until all results are completely reported. The supervisor of elections shall notify the department immediately of any circumstances that do not permit periodic updates as required. Results shall be submitted in a format prescribed by the department.

Section 35. Subsection (8) of section 102.168, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

102.168 Contest of election.—

(8) In any contest that requires a review of the canvassing board's decision on the legality of a vote-by-mail ~~an absentee~~ ballot pursuant to s. 101.68 based upon a comparison of the signature on the voter's certificate and the signature of the elector in the registration records, the circuit court may not review or consider any evidence other than the signature on the voter's certificate and the signature of the elector in the registration records. The court's review of such issue shall be to determine only if the canvassing board abused its discretion in making its decision.

Section 36. Subsection (1) of section 104.047, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

104.047 Vote-by-mail Absentee ballots and voting; violations.—

(1) Except as provided in s. 101.62 or s. 101.655, any person who requests a vote-by-mail absentee ballot on behalf of an elector is guilty of a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

Section 37. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section 104.0515, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

104.0515 Voting rights; deprivation of, or interference with, prohibited; penalty.—

(2) No person acting under color of law shall:

(b) Deny the right of any individual to vote in any election because of an error or omission on any record or paper relating to any application, registration, or other act requisite to voting, if such error or omission is not material in determining whether such individual is qualified under law to vote in such election. This paragraph shall apply to vote-by-mail absentee ballots only if there is a pattern or history of discrimination on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude in regard to vote-by-mail absentee ballots.

Section 38. Section 104.0616, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

104.0616 Vote-by-mail Absentee ballots and voting; violations.—

(1) For purposes of this section, the term “immediate family” means a person’s spouse or the parent, child, grandparent, or sibling of the person or the person’s spouse.

(2) Any person who provides or offers to provide, and any person who accepts, a pecuniary or other benefit in exchange for distributing, ordering, requesting, collecting, delivering, or otherwise physically possessing more than two vote-by-mail absentee ballots per election in addition to his or her own ballot or a ballot belonging to an immediate family member, except as provided in ss. 101.6105-101.694, commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

Section 39. Section 104.17, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

104.17 Voting in person after casting vote-by-mail absentee ballot.—Any person who willfully votes or attempts to vote both in person and by vote-by-mail absentee ballot at any election is guilty of a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

Section 40. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section 117.05, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

117.05 Use of notary commission; unlawful use; notary fee; seal; duties; employer liability; name change; advertising; photocopies; penalties.—

(2)

(b) A notary public may not charge a fee for witnessing a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot in an election, and must witness such a ballot upon the request of an elector, provided the notarial act is in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

Section 41. Subsection (7) of section 394.459, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

394.459 Rights of patients.—

(7) VOTING IN PUBLIC ELECTIONS.—A patient who is eligible to vote according to the laws of the state has the right to vote in the primary and general elections. The department shall establish rules to enable patients to obtain voter registration forms, applications for vote-by-mail absentee ballots, and vote-by-mail absentee ballots.

Section 42. Section 741.406, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

741.406 Voting by program participant; use of designated address by supervisor of elections.—A program participant who is otherwise qualified to vote may request a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee ballot pursuant to s. 101.62. The program participant shall automatically receive vote-by-mail absentee ballots for all elections in the jurisdictions in which that individual resides in the same manner as vote-by-mail absentee voters. The supervisor of elections shall transmit the vote-by-mail absentee ballot to the program participant at the address designated by the participant in his or her application as a vote-by-mail ~~an~~ absentee voter. The name, address, and telephone number of a program participant may not be included in any list of registered voters available to the public.

Section 43. Subsection (7) of section 916.107, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

916.107 Rights of forensic clients.—

(7) VOTING IN PUBLIC ELECTIONS.—A forensic client who is eligible to vote according to the laws of the state has the right to vote in the primary and general elections. The department and agency shall establish rules to enable clients to obtain voter registration forms, applications for vote-by-mail absentee ballots, and vote-by-mail absentee ballots.

Section 44. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016.

Approved by the Governor March 10, 2016.

Filed in Office Secretary of State March 10, 2016.