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**SFA****BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 199 (as introduced 2-2-99)  
Sponsor: Senator Bev Hammerstrom  
Committee: Government Operations

Date Completed: 2-24-99

## **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to specify that an absent voter would be a qualified and registered elector who wished to vote without attending the polls on the day of an election; and remove existing requirements that a voter must meet to vote by absentee ballot.**

Currently, under the Election Law, to qualify to vote by absentee ballot, a voter must be 60 years old or older, or meet one of the following requirements: the voter is absent, or expects to be absent, from his or her township or city for the entire time the polls are open on election day; the voter cannot attend the polls without assistance because of a physical disability; the voter is confined to jail awaiting arraignment or trial; the voter cannot attend the polls because of the tenets of his or her religion; or the voter is an election inspector in another precinct. The bill would delete these provisions.

Under the Election Law, an elector may apply for an absent voter ballot at any time during the 75 days before an election, but not later than 2 p.m. of the Saturday immediately preceding the election. In the event that an elector becomes physically disabled, or must be absent from his or her city or township because of sickness or death in the family, such that it is impossible to apply for an absent voter ballot by the deadline, the elector may apply for an emergency absent voter ballot at any time up to 4 p.m. on election day. The bill would eliminate this provision and provide instead that an elector could apply for an emergency absent voter ballot at any time before 4 p.m. on election day if an event occurred at a time that made it impossible to apply for an absent voter ballot by the statutory deadline. Currently, an emergency absent voter may return his or her ballot to the clerk in the sealed envelope provided, in any manner he or she sees fit; to be valid, ballots must be returned in time to be delivered to the polls prior to 8 p.m. on election day. The bill specifies that an emergency absent voter could return his or her ballot to the clerk in any manner; however, to be valid, the voter would have to return the ballot to the clerk in the sealed envelope provided for that reason and in time to be delivered to the polls before 8 p.m. on election day.

The bill would require the Secretary of State to prescribe a standard emergency absent voter ballot application form, including the size of the form and the color of the paper.

MCL 168.758 et al.

Legislative Analyst: G. Towne

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

These amendments to the Michigan Election Law could increase the pool of absentee voters. Because it is unknown how many additional people would register as absentee voters, the fiscal impact of this bill on State or local units of government is indeterminate.

Fiscal Analyst: E. Limbs

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.