

Legislative Analysis



PERMANENT ABSENTEE VOTERS LIST

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House Bill 4228

Sponsor: Rep. Chris Ward

Committee: House Oversight, Elections, and Ethics

Complete to 2-21-06

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4228 AS INTRODUCED 2-8-05

House Bill 4228 would amend the Michigan Election Law (MCL 168.495, 168.500a, and 168.759) to require a local clerk or secretary of a school board to maintain a list of permanent absentee voters.

The bill would amend two sections of the law—that concerning voter registration at the local clerk's office, as well as that concerning voter registration at the secretary of state's office (when renewing a driver's license)—to require that the forms used to register have a space for the elector to mark if he or she wants to be listed on a permanent absentee voters list.

The bill also would amend the section of the law concerning applications for absent voter ballots. Under the bill, each city, township, or village clerk and secretary of a school board would be required to compile and maintain a list of electors who requested they be listed on a permanent absentee voters list. Then, for each election conducted, the voters on that list would be mailed (or otherwise provided) an absent voter ballot application.

Currently under the law, a voter may, at any time during the 75 days before a primary election, special primary election, or general election (but not later than 2 pm on the Saturday immediately before the election), apply for an absent voter ballot. The elector must apply in person or by mail with the clerk of the township, city, or village in which he or she is registered. The application for an absent voter ballot is made by a signed written request, on an application form, or on a federal postcard application. Clerks must have forms available at all times, and furnish them to anyone who makes a verbal or written request. The bill would retain all of these provisions, and extend them to the secretaries of school boards.

Further and under the law, a voter who applies for an absentee ballot must explain the reason for his absence, selecting any one of the grounds listed in the statute: absence from the community; physically unable to attend polls without the assistance of another; unable to attend polls because of religious beliefs; appointment as an election precinct inspector in a precinct other than where the voter resides; 60 years of age or older; or unable to attend polls because of incarceration. A person who makes a false statement is guilty of a misdemeanor. The bill would retain all of these provisions.

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