



The Vermont Legislative Research Shop

Voter Identification

Currently fourteen states have enacted laws that require people to show their ID at the election booth before voting in order to correctly verify their identity thus allowing them to vote. Sixteen states have pending legislation in the 2002 legislative session, while eleven states have failed legislation in the 2002 session. The Governor of New Hampshire vetoed a bill that was passed by the House and Senate in 2002 requiring ID at voting polls (Figure 1).

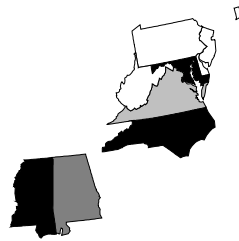


Figure 1: ID Requirements at the Polls

Absentee Balloting

Twenty-one states allow all registered voters to cast an absentee ballot for any reason. However, in a handful of states one must submit a valid reason to vote absentee; these can be reasons such as a disability or illness, travel, military, school, employment, non-felony incarceration, and religious reasons. While almost anybody can vote absentee, 26 of the states require the voter to personally to request an absentee ballot (Figure 2). In the other half of the states, agents of the voter can request an absentee ballot. These agents can be a parent, guardian, spouse, or

caretaker. The Federal Election Committee (FEC) estimates that roughly 35% of the states require the absentee ballot to be notarized while another 18% require an official notarization only if the voter is disabled or unable to sign (Federal Elections Commission, 2002).

Figure 2: Absentee Ballot Requests

Currently 26 states have pending legislation dealing with absentee ballots. The current pending legislation in Alaska is to approve absentee voting for those living in a remote area. The legislature in Wisconsin is currently reviewing a bill that would require absentee voters to complete a certification in front of two witnesses. Tennessee is also currently reviewing a bill that creates a class E felony for a person who is not an employee of the election commission to give an unsolicited request for an application for an absentee ballot. The bill also permits counting board officials to begin counting absentee and early ballots while the polls are open; but prohibits announcing the results before the polls are closed (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2002).

An Analysis of the Effect of Liberal Absentee Balloting

A study done by the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate found that states that have more liberal absentee ballot provisions have actually seen voter turnout decrease. The study looked at liberal absentee ballot procedures such as the voter has the opportunity to request

an absentee ballot without specifying a reason, early voting, all mail balloting, and lists whereby citizens have the option to be mailed an absentee ballot. Those states that adopted liberal absentee ballot provisions saw an initial increase of voter turnout with the provisions, but in the long run states have seen a voter turnout decrease greater than states with

The California Institute of Technology and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology teamed up in July 2001 and created a report where one of their many recommendations was to replace punch cards, lever machines, and older electronic machines with optical scanned ballot systems, or any electronic voting system proven to perform similarly well in extensive field tests. This would cost approximately \$2 per voter, or \$200 million, per year (over a fifteen to twenty year span) (Caltech/MIT, 2001).

Currently the bill H.R. 3295 deemed the *Help America Vote Act 2001*, has passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, and is now in a conference committee. The bill will provide legal assistance to states and/or counties in order to replace punch card machines with a more updated system such as optical scanners, touch screens and others (Congressional Record, 2002). The bill would also provide \$1 billion in 2002, \$750 million in 2003 and \$500 million in 2004 to help the states meet these standards and buy new equipment. The federal government would pay 75 percent of the costs, with states paying the rest (Seelye, 2001).

Provisional Ballots

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Indiana's voter registration system that (Theobald,

Washington's bill in 2002 with the computer registration whose results (2002).

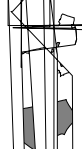
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Primary Election Dates

Figure 4 shows the different states primary dates for the year 2002 to give a comparison of the general election season (time between the primary and general election). Each state uses its own

Washington Secretary of State Sam Reed, March 12, 2002. “Statewide Voter registration System Adopted” http://www.secstate.wa.gov/office/news.aspx?news_id=154

Compiled by Jesse Kraham, and Nathan Bosshard, on April 2, 2001.

Updated by Steve Adams, Stephanie Bennett, and Matthew Reed on April 17, 2002.

Table 1: Provisional Ballots

	By what method can a person vote when her or his name does not appear on the official voter registration list?
Alabama	Challenge ballot

Maryland	Provisional ballot
Massachusetts	Obtain verification from registrar of voters and sign a certificate

Michigan Must sign an affidavit

Michigan 103.68 691M840.52a Votinai/2/5/2010/02/01/0007

	registration can be located)
Texas	Must show ID and sign an affidavit
Utah	Must receive oral verification from the county clerk's office
Vermont	Adding name of person as directed by any superior or district judge on appeal or sign an affidavit

Virginia

