

HCS HB 1600 -- ELECTIONS

SPONSOR: Simmons

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elections and Elected Officials by a vote of 4 to 2. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee of Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 7 to 3.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1600.

This bill modifies election laws. In its main provisions the bill:

(1) Requires candidates filing their declaration of candidacy with the Secretary of State to pay their fee to the treasurer of the appropriate political party committee;

(2) Requires persons voting in person by use of an absentee ballot to establish their identity under Section 115.427, RSMo;

(3) Allows voters without personal identification at a polling place to vote a provisional ballot which will be counted based upon a certification process and the return of documentation or by a signature verification process conducted by the election authority; and

(4) Repeals certain affidavit and notice requirements under Section 115.427;

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that with the Supreme Court decision, we could make this bill as simple and clear as possible so that everyone who is registered can vote and the elections would be fair trustworthy elections. Key parts of this bill protect the integrity of Missouri's voting system. This new law makes it so no one is turned away at the ballot box for not having proper identification with the provisional ballot language. With the law change in 2016, there was no way for the Secretary of State to get information to investigate and determine any wrong doing so they are requesting limited subpoena power.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Simmons and Jay Ashcroft, Missouri Secretary of State.

OPPONENTS: Opponents say that the bill is unconstitutional and

problematic because it strips the option of voter identification. Lawmakers cannot suggest photo identification is required when in fact it is not. The court rejected the same provisions as is in this bill and said it would be unconstitutional. If passed there will be another lawsuit. The removal of the notice of voting rules will cause confusion. The state's outreach and education has been insufficient and confusion results in lower voter turnout. The underlying premise that our election system is poor, is wrong. This bill is fighting a battle that has no legitimate purpose. Any changes to voter identification hurts people of color and homeless more and every vote should count.

Testifying against the bill were MO Voter Protection Coalition; Missouri National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Missouri State Conference NAACP; Jewish Community Relations Council; MO Association of County Clerks and Elected Officials; Steve Korsmeyer, Cole County Clerk; American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri; MO Coalition of the Environment; and MO Council-Service Employees International Union.

OTHERS: There was no others testifying on the bill.