

CCS SCS SB 631 -- ELECTIONS

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

(1) Allows any state employee that is not subject to the Merit System or the Uniform Classification and Pay System to run for the nomination, or as a candidate for election, to a partisan political office (Section 36.155, RSMo);

(2) Allows persons required to file financial interest statements to make a written request to redact the name and employer of their dependent children under 21 years of age (Section 105.485);

(3) Creates an additional absentee ballot voting justification that applies in instances where the voter has contracted, or is at risk to contract, severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2. At risk individuals are defined based on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations that are specified in the bill. Notary signature verification is not required and absentee ballot statements will have a format referencing the Coronavirus justification. Any ballot envelope used for mail-in ballots shall be the same as the ballot envelope used for absentee ballots, provided the envelope has options listed to clearly indicate which ballot the voter is casting. The Coronavirus justification to vote an absentee ballot will expire on December 31, 2020 (Sections 115.277, 115.289, 115.285, and 115.291);

(4) Allows any registered voter to cast a mail-in ballot during 2020 in order to avoid the risk of contracting or transmitting severe acute respiratory Coronavirus 2. Applications for a mail-in ballot may be made in person or by mail as specified in the bill. Voters casting a mail-in ballot are required to execute and submit a notarized statement under penalty of perjury with the ballot. Knowingly making, delivering, or mailing a fraudulent mail-in ballot application is a class one election offense. Additionally, the false execution of a mail-in ballot is a class one election offense. The prosecuting attorney or the Attorney General may prosecute any false execution of a mail-in ballot. Upon receipt of an application, the election authority will deliver a mail-in ballot as specified in the bill. No information which encourages a vote for or against a candidate or issue shall be provided to any voter with the ballot. Ballots must be returned by mail no later than the closing of polls on election day. Any ballot received after such time shall not be counted. These provisions contain an emergency clause and expire on December 31, 2020 (Section 115.302);

(5) Changes the filing fee from \$200 to \$500 for candidates for statewide office or United States Senator; from \$100 to \$300 for candidates for Representative in Congress, circuit judge, or State

Senator; and from \$50 to \$150 for candidates for State Representative. County office filing fees will increase from \$50 to \$100. The bill also changes the filing fee from \$1000 to \$5000 for candidates for President to be on the presidential primary ballot (Section 115.357 and 115.761);

(6) Modifies Senatorial district political party committee meeting dates. Currently, the members of each Senatorial district political party committee are required to meet on the Saturday after each general election for the purpose of electing members to the state political party committee. In lieu of that requirement, this bill permits the chair of the Congressional district committee where the Senatorial district is principally located to call for a meeting to be held concurrently with the election of Senatorial officers for the purpose of electing members to the state political party committee (Section 115.621);

(7) Authorizes the Secretary of State to issue and enforce subpoenas when it is necessary to conduct an investigation of certain election offenses. These powers may only be exercised by the secretary or an authorized representative of the secretary at the specific written direction of the secretary or his or her chief deputy. Failure to comply with a subpoena may be enforced through court order. These provisions expire August 28, 2025 (Section 115.642); and

(8) Extends the sunset date of certain filing fees charged by the Secretary of State from December 31, 2021, to December 31, 2026 (Sections 347.400, and 417.018).

This bill contains an emergency clause for certain sections and existing penalty provisions.