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HOUSE BILL NO. 2478

Offered January 13, 2025

Prefiled January 8, 2025

A BILL to amend and reenact § 24.2-707.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to elections; absentee voting; drop-off locations for return of absentee ballots; 24-hour video surveillance requirement.

Patrons—Zehr, Walker, Arnold, Austin, Ballard, Davis, Earley, Ennis, Fowler, Freitas, Garrett, Gilbert, Green, Griffin, Higgins, Kilgore, Milde, Oates, Obenshain, O'Quinn, Orrock, Owen, Runion, Scott, P.A., Tata, Wachsmann, Webert, Wiley, Williams, Wilt and Wright

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 24.2-707.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 24.2-707.1. Drop-off locations for return of absentee ballots.**

A. The general registrar of each county or city shall establish at the office of the general registrar and each voter satellite office in operation for an election a drop-off location for the purpose of allowing the deposit of completed absentee ballots for such election. On the day of the election, there shall also be a drop-off location at each polling place in operation for the election. The general registrar may establish additional drop-off locations within the county or city as he deems necessary. All drop-off locations shall be accessible; be on public property, unless located at a polling place; and otherwise comply with any criteria for drop-off locations set by the Department.

B. The Department shall set standards for the establishment and operation of drop-off locations, including necessary security requirements. *Such security requirements shall include the provision of 24-hour video surveillance of all drop-off locations.* The Department shall submit such standards annually by October 1 to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Privileges and Elections, the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations, and the House Committee on Appropriations.

C. Not later than 55 days prior to any election, the general registrar shall post notice of the sites of the drop-off locations in the locality in the office of the general registrar and on the official website of the county or city. Such notice shall remain in the office of the general registrar and on the official website of the county or city for the duration of the period during which absentee ballots may be returned.

D. Absentee ballots shall be collected from drop-off locations in accordance with the instructions provided by the Department. Such instructions shall include chain of custody requirements and recordkeeping requirements. Absentee ballots shall be collected at least daily by (i) two officers of election or electoral board members representing the two major political parties where practicable or (ii) two employees from the office of the general registrar, unless the drop-off location is in the office of the general registrar, in which case the general registrar or a deputy general registrar may collect the absentee ballots.

INTRODUCED

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