

HOUSE BILL 1616

By Richey

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 2,
relative to elections.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 2-2-116, is amended by adding the following new language on the permanent registration record when a person registers to vote:

13. Statewide Political Party or Recognized Minor Party Affiliation _____

Notice: A voter choosing not to select a statewide political party or recognized minor party affiliation will be registered as "Unaffiliated" and remains eligible to vote in a primary election.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 2-2-118, is amended by adding the following new subsections:

(e) At the time of initial registration, each qualified voter may select on the registration application an affiliation with a statewide political party or recognized minor party qualified to participate in elections, or may select to be designated as "Unaffiliated." The county election commission shall record the party affiliation or unaffiliated designation as part of the voter's permanent registration record. If a voter fails or refuses to make a selection, the county election commission shall enter on the permanent registration records that the voter is unaffiliated.

(f) In order to provide a voter who is already registered to vote and who remains a registered voter with an opportunity to select a party affiliation or to select an unaffiliated status, the voter shall make such a declaration to be recorded on the voter's permanent registration record at either the first primary in which the voter participates on

or after the effective date of this act or the county election commission office during the registration periods specified under § 2-2-109.

SECTION 3. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 2-2-109(a), is amended by deleting the first sentence and substituting instead the following:

A qualified voter may register or have the voter's registration altered at the commission office at any time the office is open, except that applications for registration, or alterations to a political party affiliation or an unaffiliated status, must not be processed for twenty-nine (29) days immediately preceding an election, except as provided in subsection (b); provided, that a qualified voter may file a mail registration form by postmarking the registration form or submitting the registration form thirty (30) days before an election.

SECTION 4. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 2-7-115, is amended by deleting subsection (b) and substituting instead the following:

(b) A registered voter may vote in a primary election for offices for which the voter is qualified to vote at the polling place where the voter is registered if:

(1) The voter is a bona fide member of, and is recorded on the voter's permanent registration record as being affiliated with, the political party in whose primary the voter seeks to vote;

(2) The voter is designated on the voter's permanent registration record as "Unaffiliated"; or

(3) The primary election is the first primary election the voter has participated in on or after the effective date of this act and the voter affiliates with a political party or is designated as "Unaffiliated" in accordance with § 2-2-118(f). Such affiliation or designation must then be added to the voter's permanent registration record.

SECTION 5. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 2-2-112(b), is amended by adding the following new subdivision (3) and redesignating the existing subdivision (3) as subdivision (4):

(3) Affiliate with, or change a registered voter's affiliation with, a statewide political party or recognized minor party, or be designated as "Unaffiliated"; provided, that such change in affiliation or designation complies with the registration periods prescribed under § 2-2-109; and

SECTION 6. This act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.