

2022 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 279

BY REPRESENTATIVE HODGES

ELECTIONS/POLL WATCHERS: Provides relative to poll watchers

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 18:435(A)(4) and (B)(2) and to enact R.S. 18:435(A)(1)(c) and
3 (5) and (B)(1)(c) and 1309(N), relative to elections; to provide for the appointment
4 of poll watchers by political parties; to provide for an effective date; and to provide
5 for related matters.

6 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

7 Section 1. R.S. 18:435(A)(4) and (B)(2) are hereby amended and reenacted and R.S.
8 18:435(A)(1)(c) and (5) and (B)(1)(c), and 1309(N) are hereby enacted to read as follows:

9 §435. Watchers; appointment and commission

10 A.(1)

11 * * *

12 (c) A state central committee of a political party recognized pursuant to R.S.
13 18:441, and having at least twenty-five percent of the registered voters in the state
14 registered as being affiliated with the political party, is entitled to have one watcher
15 at every precinct on election day where a candidate affiliated with the political party
16 is on the ballot. The chairman of the state central committee shall sign and file one
17 list of watchers on a form provided by the secretary of state or on a form which
18 contains the same information as required by the form provided by the secretary of
19 state.

20 * * *

1 (4)(a) The state central committee of a recognized political party having at
2 least twenty-five percent of the registered voters in the state registered as being
3 affiliated with such political party is entitled to have political party super watchers
4 in each parish in which a candidate affiliated with such political party is on the
5 ballot. The designation of political party super watchers shall be made in accordance
6 with this Section and as provided in Subparagraph (b) of this Paragraph.

7 (b)(i) In a parish with fewer than fifty thousand registered voters, the state
8 central committee of such a recognized political party may designate one political
9 party super watcher.

10 (ii) In a parish with fifty thousand or more but fewer than one hundred
11 thousand registered voters, the state central committee of such a recognized political
12 party may designate two political party super watchers.

13 (iii) In a parish with one hundred thousand or more but fewer than one
14 hundred-fifty thousand registered voters, the state central committee of such a
15 recognized political party may designate three political party super watchers.

16 (iv) In a parish with one hundred-fifty thousand or more but fewer than two
17 hundred thousand registered voters, the state central committee of such a recognized
18 political party may designate four political party super watchers.

19 (v) In a parish with two hundred thousand or more registered voters, the state
20 central committee of such a recognized political party may designate five political
21 party super watchers.

22 (c) Each political party super watcher shall have the qualifications, powers,
23 and duties of watchers provided for by R.S. 18:427 and shall be admitted as a
24 watcher in every precinct in the designated parish where a candidate affiliated with
25 his political party is on the ballot, except that not more than one political party super
26 watcher may serve at a single precinct at the same time.

27 (d) The chairman of the state central committee of the political party shall
28 sign and be responsible for filing the list of political party super watchers.

1 (5) The commissioners shall regulate the number of watchers inside the
2 polling place as provided in R.S. 18:427.

3 B.(1)

4 * * *

5 (c) A list of political party super watchers submitted by a party for the
6 primary election may be used for the general election only if the chairman of the
7 state central committee of the party notifies the clerk of court in writing by 4:30 p.m.
8 on the tenth business day before the general election that he wants to use the same
9 list of political party super watchers.

10 (2) Except for a candidate, a state central committee of a recognized political
11 party filing a list of political party super watchers, or recognized political party filing
12 for a slate of candidates for presidential elector, any person filing a list of watchers
13 must shall attach a certified statement that the report required by R.S. 18:1486 has
14 been filed with the supervisory committee in compliance with the Campaign Finance
15 Disclosure Act.

16 * * *

17 §1309. Early voting; verification

18 * * *

19 N.(1) The state central committee of a recognized political party having at
20 least twenty-five percent of the registered voters in the state registered as being
21 affiliated with such political party is entitled to have an early voting watcher at each
22 early voting location, as space permits, at which a candidate affiliated with the
23 political party is on the ballot.

24 (2) A qualified voter of the state who is not a candidate in the election may
25 serve as an early voting watcher.

26 (3) A watcher shall be admitted within the designated early voting location
27 during the conduct of early voting where a candidate affiliated with such political
28 party is on the ballot and shall call any infraction of the law to the attention of the
29 registrar of voters or deputy registrar. An early voting watcher may keep notes on

1 the conduct of early voting, but he shall not take part in performing the procedures
2 of Subsections D, E, and F of this Section. An early voting watcher shall not
3 electioneer, engage in political discussions, or unnecessarily delay a voter at the
4 polling place. An early voting watcher is subject to the authority of the registrar of
5 voters or deputy registrar and shall not interfere with the registrar or deputy registrar
6 in the performance of his duties. A state central committee of a political party may
7 have both a watcher and alternate watcher serve at the same early voting location,
8 except that the early voting watcher and alternate watcher may not serve at a single
9 voting location at the same time.

10 (4) The registrar of voters or deputy registrar shall regulate the number of
11 watchers inside the early voting location as provided in R.S. 18:427.

12 (5) A list of early voting watchers shall be filed with the registrar of voters
13 by hand delivery, facsimile, mail, or commercial courier before 4:30 p.m. on the
14 fourteenth business day before the first day of early voting for the primary or general
15 election; however, if the fourteenth business day before the first day of early voting
16 for the primary or general election falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or other legal
17 holiday, the list shall be filed on the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, or
18 other legal holiday. For purposes of this Paragraph, "commercial courier" shall have
19 the same meaning as provided in R.S. 13:3204(D).

20 (6) The chairman of the state central committee of the political party shall
21 sign and be responsible for filing the list of early voting watchers. If candidates
22 affiliated with the political party are on the ballot in more than one parish, a list of
23 watchers shall be filed with the registrar of voters in each parish where the political
24 party will have early voting watchers.

25 (7) A list of early voting watchers submitted for the primary election may
26 be used for the general election only if the chairman of the state central committee
27 of the political party notifies the registrar of voters in writing by 4:30 p.m. on the
28 tenth business day before the start of early voting for the general election that he
29 wants to use the same list of early voting watchers.

- 1 (8) A list of early voting watchers shall contain only one early voting
 2 watcher and one alternate watcher for each early voting location where the state
 3 central committee of the political party is entitled to have an early voting watcher.
 4 The list shall be typed or legibly written, and it shall contain the name and mailing
 5 address of each early voting watcher and alternate watcher and a designation of the
 6 early voting location where each is to serve.
 7 Section 2. This Act shall become effective on January 1, 2023.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 279 Original

2022 Regular Session

Hodges

Abstract: Provides for the appointment of poll watchers by the state central committee of certain political parties.

Present law provides that a candidate may designate watchers to serve at every precinct on election day where the office he seeks is voted on in an election. Further provides for the procedure of designating such watchers. Authorizes a candidate to appoint a super watcher who shall be admitted to every precinct in the parish where the candidate is on the ballot.

Proposed law authorizes the state central committee of a political party recognized having at least 25% of the registered voters in the state to:

- (1) Designate one watcher at every precinct on election day where a candidate affiliated with the political party is on the ballot.
- (2) Designate super watchers in each parish in which a candidate affiliated with the party is on the ballot. Further provides for the number of super watchers that may be designated by a recognized political party based on the number of registered voters in the parish.
- (3) Designate an early voting watcher at each early voting location, as space permits, at which a candidate affiliated with such political party is on the ballot. Further provides for the qualifications, powers, and duties of such watcher. Also provides for the procedure for nominating such watcher.

Effective Jan. 1, 2023.

(Amends R.S. 18:435(A)(4) and (B)(2); Adds 18:435(A)(1)(c) and (5) and (B)(1)(c) and 1309(N))