

HCS HB 334 -- ELECTIONS

SPONSOR: Simmons

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

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 334.

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

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

(2) 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

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

This bill is similar to HCS HB 1600 (2020).

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 the bill will clarify photo identification practices to conform with recent court rulings about affidavit language. The use of provisional ballots is allowed in cases where photo identification is not provided and such ballot are almost always counted as a statistical matter. Every voter requesting assistance to obtain photo identification has been helped in recent years. The bill removes a line item appropriation because the Missouri Secretary of State's office can absorb costs using its general revenue.

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

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that litigation could still arise because of the difficulty in obtaining photo identification for many persons. The specific funding for notice about voting identification policies by the Missouri Secretary of State's office should remain in place. Allowing the use of regular ballots where valid identification of some kind is provided is

superior to the use of provisional ballots.

Testifying against the bill were Denise D. Lieberman, Missouri Voter Protection Coalition; Elizabeth Kramer; American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri; Otto Fajen, Missouri National Education Association; Ron Berry, AARP; Sarah E. Felts, Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri; Missouri State Conference NAACP; and PROMO.

This bill is similar to HCS HB 1600 (2020).