THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL No. 414 Session of 2019

INTRODUCED BY SCHWANK, FOLMER, KILLION, ARGALL, STREET, BAKER, SANTARSIERO, COSTA, FARNESE, DISANTO, K. WARD, YUDICHAK, BLAKE, BROWNE, KEARNEY AND BREWSTER, MARCH 19, 2019

REFERRED TO STATE GOVERNMENT, MARCH 19, 2019

AN ACT

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Amending the act of June 3, 1937 (P.L.1333, No.320), entitled "An act concerning elections, including general, municipal, special and primary elections, the nomination of candidates, primary and election expenses and election contests; creating and defining membership of county boards of elections; imposing duties upon the Secretary of the Commonwealth, courts, county boards of elections, county commissioners; imposing penalties for violation of the act, and codifying, revising and consolidating the laws relating thereto; and repealing certain acts and parts of acts relating to elections," in voting by qualified absentee electors, further providing for applications for official absentee ballots, for
13 14 15	absentee electors files and lists, for delivering or mailing ballots, for voting by absentee electors and for canvassing of official absentee ballots.
15	The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
17	hereby enacts as follows:
18	Section 1. Sections 1302(b), (e.1) and (i), 1302.3(b) and
19	(c), 1305, 1306 and 1308(b.1), (e) and (g) of the act of June 3,
20	1937 (P.L.1333, No.320), known as the Pennsylvania Election
21	Code, are amended to read:
22	Section 1302. Applications for Official Absentee Ballots*
23	* *
24	(b) The application shall contain the following information:

Home residence [at the time of entrance into actual military 1 service or Federal employment], length of time a citizen, length 2 3 of residence in Pennsylvania, date of birth, length of time a resident of voting district, voting district if known, party 4 choice in case of primary, name and, for a military elector, his 5 stateside military address, FPO or APO number and serial number. 6 Any elector [other than a military elector] shall in addition 7 8 specify [the nature of his employment, the address to which ballot is to be sent, relationship where necessary, and] such 9 10 other information as may be determined and prescribed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth. When such application is received 11 by the Secretary of the Commonwealth it shall be forwarded to 12 13 the proper county board of election.

14 * * *

(e.1) Any qualified registered elector[, including any 15 16 qualified bedridden or hospitalized veteran,] who is unable because of illness or physical disability to attend his polling 17 18 place on the day of any primary or election or operate a voting 19 machine and state distinctly and audibly that he is unable to do 20 so as required by section 1218 of this act may, with the 21 certification by his attending physician that he is permanently disabled, and physically unable to attend the polls or operate a 22 23 voting machine and make the distinct and audible statement 24 required by section 1218 appended to the application 25 hereinbefore required, be placed on a permanently disabled 26 absentee ballot list file. An absentee ballot application shall be mailed to every such person otherwise eligible to receive one_ 27 28 for each primary or election so long as he does not lose his 29 voting rights by failure to vote as otherwise required by this 30 act. Such person shall not be required to file a physician's

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1 certificate of disability with each application as required in
2 subsection (e) of this section [but such person must submit a
3 written statement asserting continuing disability every four
4 years in order to maintain his eligibility to vote under the
5 provisions of this subsection]. Should any such person lose his
6 disability he shall inform the county board of elections of the
7 county of his residence.

8 * * *

9 (i) Application for official absentee ballots shall be on 10 forms prescribed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth. The application shall state that a voter who receives and votes an 11 absentee ballot pursuant to section 1301 [and who, on election 12 13 day, is capable of voting at the appropriate] shall not be 14 eligible to vote at a polling place [must void the absentee ballot and vote in the normal manner at the appropriate voting 15 16 place] on election day. Such forms shall be made freely available to the public at county board of elections, municipal 17 18 buildings and at such other locations designated by the 19 secretary. No written application or personal request shall be 20 necessary to receive the application forms. Copies of all 21 completed applications for official absentee ballots shall be retained by the county board of elections. 22

23 * * *

24 Section 1302.3. Absentee Electors Files and Lists.--* * *

[(b) The county board of elections shall post in a conspicuous public place at its office a master list arranged in alphabetical order by election districts setting forth the name and residence, and at primaries, the party enrollment, of (1) every military elector to whom an absentee ballot is being sent, each such name to be prefixed with an "M"; (2) every bedridden

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or hospitalized veteran outside the county of his residence who 1 2 is not registered and to whom an absentee ballot is being sent, each such name to be prefixed with a "V"; and (3) every 3 registered elector who has filed his application for an absentee 4 ballot too late for the extraction of his original registration 5 card and to whom a ballot is being sent and every qualified 6 7 elector who has filed his application for an absentee ballot and 8 is entitled, under provisions of the Permanent Registration Law as now or hereinafter enacted by the General Assembly, to 9 10 absentee registration prior to or concurrently with the time of voting, each such name to be prefixed with a "C." This list 11 shall be known as the Military, Veterans and Emergency Civilians 12 13 Absentee Voters File for the Primary or Election of (date of 14 primary or election) and shall be posted for a period commencing 15 the Tuesday prior to the day of the primary or election until 16 the day following the primary or election or the day on which the county board of elections certifies the returns of the 17 18 primary or election, whichever date is later. Such file shall be 19 open to public inspection at all times subject to reasonable 20 safeguards, rules and regulations. This posted list shall not contain any military address or references to any military 21 22 organization. Upon written request, the county board shall 23 furnish a copy of such list to any candidate or party county 24 chairman.]

(c) Not less than five days preceding the election, the chief clerk shall prepare a list for each election district showing the names and post office addresses of all voting residents thereof to whom official absentee ballots shall have been issued. Each such list shall be prepared in duplicate, shall be headed "Persons in (give identity of election district)

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to whom absentee ballots have been issued for the election of 1 2 (date of election)," and shall be signed by him not less than 3 four days preceding the election. [He shall post the original of each such list in a conspicuous place in the office of the 4 county election board and see that it is kept so posted until 5 the close of the polls on election day.] He shall cause the 6 duplicate of each such list to be delivered to the judge of 7 8 election in the election district in the same manner and at the 9 same time as are provided in this act for the delivery of other 10 election supplies[, and it shall be the duty of such judge of election to post such duplicate list in a conspicuous place 11 within the polling place of his district and see that it is kept 12 13 so posted throughout the time that the polls are open]. Upon written request, he shall furnish a copy of such list to any 14 15 candidate or party county chairman.

16 Section 1305. Delivering or Mailing Ballots.--

The county board of elections upon receipt and approval 17 (a) 18 of an application filed by any elector qualified in accordance with the provisions of section 1301, subsections (a) to (h), 19 20 inclusive, shall [not later than fifty days prior to the day of the primary or not later than seventy days prior to the day of 21 the election commence to deliver or mail to such elector who has 22 23 included with said application a statement that he or she is 24 unable to vote during the regular absentee balloting period by 25 reason of living or performing military service in an extremely remote or isolated area of the world, and not later than forty-26 five days prior to the day of the primary or election commence 27 to deliver or mail to all other such electors as provided for in 28 29 section 1301, subsections (a) to (h), inclusive, official 30 absentee ballots or special write-in absentee ballots as

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prescribed by subsection (d) of section 1303 when official 1 2 absentee ballots are not yet printed; as additional applications of such electors are received, the board shall deliver or mail 3 official absentee ballots or special write-in absentee ballots 4 when official absentee ballots are not yet printed to such 5 6 additional electors within forty-eight hours after approval of 7 their application. If the calling of a special election would 8 make it impossible to comply with the forty-five day delivery or mailing requirement of this section, then the county board of 9 10 elections shall mail absentee ballots or special write-in absentee ballots within five days of the county board's receipt 11 12 of the information necessary to prepare said ballots. 13 (b) The county board of elections upon receipt and approval 14 of an application filed by any elector qualified in accordance with the provisions of section 1301, subsections (i) to (1), 15 16 inclusive, shall commence to deliver or mail official absentee ballots on the second Tuesday prior to the primary or election. 17 18 For those applicants whose proof of identification was not 19 provided with the application or could not be verified by the board, the board shall send the notice required under section 20 1302.2(d) with the absentee ballot. As additional applications 21 are received and approved, the board shall deliver or mail 22 23 official absentee ballots to such additional electors within 24 forty-eight hours. 25 (c) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, a qualified absentee elector shall not be required to provide 26 proof of identification if the elector is entitled to vote by 27 28 absentee ballot under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens 29 Absentee Voting Act (Public Law 99-410, 100 Stat. 924) or by an alternative ballot under the Voting Accessibility for the 30

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1	Elderly and Handicapped Act (Public Law 98-435, 98 Stat. 1678).]
2	commence to deliver or mail an official absentee ballot to the
3	applicant as soon as the ballot is available and certified by
4	the board. The county board of elections may await the
5	resolution of a legal proceeding in a Federal or State court
6	pertaining to the contents of the official absentee ballot
7	before delivering or mailing the official absentee ballot to the
8	applicant. Notwithstanding whether or not the county board of
9	elections is awaiting the resolution of a legal proceeding in a
10	Federal or State court, the board shall commence to deliver or
11	mail an official absentee ballot to the applicant not later than
12	the second Tuesday before the primary or election. If the
13	applicant failed to provide proof of identification with the
14	application or the proof of identification could not be verified
15	by the county board of elections, the board shall send the
16	notice required under section 1302.2(d) to the elector. If an
17	application is received and approved after the time that the
18	county board of elections commences delivering or mailing
19	official absentee ballots, the board shall deliver or mail an
20	official absentee ballot to the elector within forty-eight
21	hours.
22	(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of this act, an elector
23	who is qualified under section 1301 may present an application
24	for an official absentee ballot in-person at the office of the
25	county board of elections during regular business hours. The
26	applicant shall not be required to include the applicant's
27	mailing address on the application. Upon receipt of an
28	application which meets the requirements under this section, the
29	county board of elections shall promptly deliver an official
30	absentee ballot unless there is a bona fide objection to the
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1 <u>application</u>.

2 Section 1306. Voting by Absentee Electors. -- (a) Except as provided in paragraphs (1), (2) and (3), at any time after 3 receiving an official absentee ballot, but on or before [five] 4 eight o'clock P.M. on the [Friday] Monday prior to the primary 5 or election, the elector shall, in secret, proceed to mark the 6 ballot only in black lead pencil, indelible pencil or blue, 7 black or blue-black ink, in fountain pen or ball point pen, and 8 then fold the ballot, enclose and securely seal the same in the 9 10 envelope on which is printed, stamped or endorsed "Official 11 Absentee Ballot."

(1) [Any elector who submits an Emergency Application and 12 receives an absentee ballot in accordance with section 13 1302.1(a.2) or (c) shall mark the ballot on or before eight 14 15 o'clock P.M. on the day of the primary or election. This 16 envelope shall then be placed in the second one, on which is printed the form of declaration of the elector, and the address 17 of the elector's county board of election and the local election 18 19 district of the elector. The elector shall then fill out, date and sign the declaration printed on such envelope. Such envelope 20 21 shall then be securely sealed and the elector shall send same by mail, postage prepaid, except where franked, or deliver it in 22 person to said county board of election.] (Reserved). 23

(2) Any elector, spouse of the elector or dependent of the elector, qualified in accordance with the provisions of section 1301, subsections (e), (f), (g) and (h) to vote by absentee ballot as herein provided, shall be required to include on the form of declaration a supporting declaration in form prescribed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, to be signed by the head of the department or chief of division or bureau in which the

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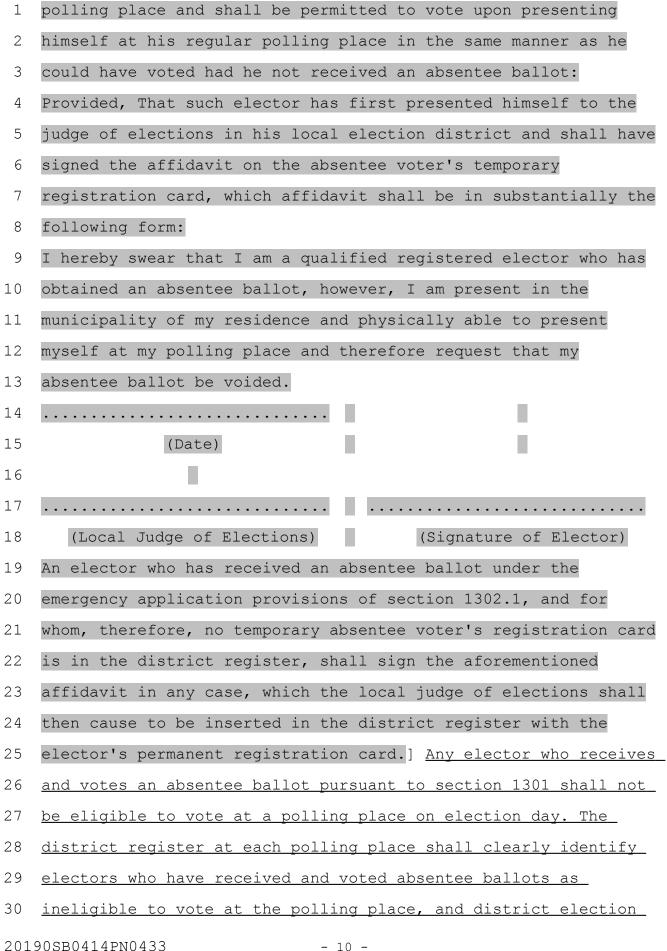
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elector is employed, setting forth the identity of the elector,
 spouse of the elector or dependent of the elector.

3 (3) Any elector who has filed his application in accordance with section 1302 subsection (e)(2), and is unable to sign his 4 declaration because of illness or physical disability, shall be 5 excused from signing upon making a declaration which shall be 6 witnessed by one adult person in substantially the following 7 8 form: I hereby declare that I am unable to sign my declaration for voting my absentee ballot without assistance because I am 9 10 unable to write by reason of my illness or physical disability. 11 I have made or received assistance in making my mark in lieu of 12 my signature. 13 14(Mark) 15 (Date) 16 17 18 (Complete Address of Witness) (Signature of Witness) 19 [In the event that any such elector, excepting an (b) elector in military service or any elector unable to go to his 20

polling place because of illness or physical disability, 21 entitled to vote an official absentee ballot shall be in the 22 municipality of his residence on the day for holding the primary 23 24 or election for which the ballot was issued, or in the event any such elector shall have recovered from his illness or physical 25 26 disability sufficiently to permit him to present himself at the proper polling place for the purpose of casting his ballot, such 27 absentee ballot cast by such elector shall, be declared void. 28 29 Any such elector referred to in this subsection, who is within the municipality of his residence, must present himself at his 30

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1	officers shall not permit said electors to vote at the polling	
2	place.	
3	(c) Any elector voting with an absentee ballot shall:	
4	(1) deliver the ballot in person to the county board of	
5	elections by eight o'clock P.M. on the day of the primary or	
6	election; or	
7	(2) mail the ballot such that it is postmarked no later than	
8	the day immediately preceding the election.	
9	(d) (1) When a ballot is presented to a county board of	
10	elections with a postmark that is missing or illegible, the	
11	board may determine that the ballot was timely cast and	
12	submitted if there are other reliable indicia of the date the	
13	<u>ballot was sent.</u>	
14	(2) A board may rely on the date given on the voter's	
15	affidavit under paragraph (1) or on additional information	
16	obtained from the United States Postal Service, the foreign	
17	postal agency or the private carrier or courier service through	
18	which the ballot was delivered.	
19	(e) As used in this subsection:	
20	"Postmark" means the official cancellation of postage, or	
21	other indicia, as stamped printed or written on the delivery	
22	envelope to indicate the date it was submitted for delivery by	
23	the United States Postal Service, a foreign postal agency or a	
24	recognized private common carrier or courier service.	
25	Section 1308. Canvassing of Official Absentee Ballots* *	
26	*	
27	(b.1) [In all election districts in which electronic voting	
28	systems are used, absentee ballots shall be opened at the	
29	election district, checked for write-in votes in accordance with	
30	section 1113-A and then either hand-counted or counted by means	
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1 of the automatic tabulation equipment, whatever the case may
2 be.] (Reserved).

3 * * *

[At such time the local election board shall then 4 (e) further examine the declaration on each envelope not so set 5 6 aside and shall compare the information thereon with that 7 contained in the "Registered Absentee Voters File," the absentee 8 voters' list and the "Military Veterans and Emergency Civilians Absentee Voters File." If the local election board is satisfied 9 10 that the declaration is sufficient and the information contained in the "Registered Absentee Voters File," the absentee voters' 11 list and the "Military Veterans and Emergency Civilians Absentee 12 13 Voters File" verifies his right to vote, the local election 14 board shall announce the name of the elector and shall give any 15 watcher present an opportunity to challenge any absentee elector 16 upon the ground or grounds (1) that the absentee elector is not 17 a qualified elector ; or (2) that the absentee elector was 18 within the municipality of his residence on the day of the 19 primary or election during the period the polls were open, 20 except where he was in military service or except in the case where his ballot was obtained for the reason that he was unable 21 to appear personally at the polling place because of illness or 22 23 physical disability; or (3) that the absentee elector was able 24 to appear personally at the polling place on the day of the 25 primary or election during the period the polls were open in the case his ballot was obtained for the reason that he was unable 26 to appear personally at the polling place because of illness or 27 28 physical disability. Upon challenge of any absentee elector, as 29 set forth herein the local election board shall mark "challenged" on the envelope together with the reason or reasons 30

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therefor, and the same shall be set aside for return to the 1 2 county board unopened pending decision by the county board and 3 shall not be counted. All absentee ballots not challenged for any of the reasons provided herein shall be counted and included 4 with the general return of paper ballots or voting machines, as 5 the case may be as follows. Thereupon, the local election board 6 7 shall open the envelope of every unchallenged absentee elector 8 in such manner as not to destroy the declaration executed 9 thereon. All of such envelopes on which are printed, stamped or endorsed the words "Official Absentee Ballot" shall be placed in 10 one or more depositories at one time and said depository or 11 depositories well shaken and the envelopes mixed before any 12 13 envelope is taken therefrom. If any of these envelopes shall 14 contain any extraneous marks or identifying symbols other than the words "Official Absentee Ballot," the envelopes and the 15 16 ballots contained therein shall be set aside and declared void. The local election board shall then break the seals of such 17 18 envelopes, remove the ballots and record the votes in the same 19 manner as district election officers are required to record 20 votes. With respect to the challenged ballots, they shall be 21 returned to the county board with the returns of the local election district where they shall be placed unopened in a 22 23 secure, safe and sealed container in the custody of the county 24 board until it shall fix a time and place for a formal hearing 25 of all such challenges and notice shall be given where possible 26 to all absentee electors thus challenged and to every attorney, 27 watcher or candidate who made such challenge. The time for the 28 hearing shall not be later than seven (7) days after the date of 29 said challenge. On the day fixed for said hearing, the county board shall proceed without delay to hear said challenges and, 30

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in hearing the testimony, the county board shall not be bound by 1 2 technical rules of evidence. The testimony presented shall be stenographically recorded and made part of the record of the 3 hearing. The decision of the county board in upholding or 4 dismissing any challenge may be reviewed by the court of common 5 6 pleas of the county upon a petition filed by any person 7 aggrieved by the decision of the county board. Such appeal shall 8 be taken, within two (2) days after such decision shall have been made, whether reduced to writing or not, to the court of 9 10 common pleas setting forth the objections to the county board's decision and praying for an order reversing same. Pending the 11 final determination of all appeals, the county board shall 12 13 suspend any action in canvassing and computing all challenged 14 ballots irrespective of whether or not appeal was taken from the county board's decision. Upon completion of the computation of 15 16 the returns of the county, the votes cast upon the challenged official absentee ballots shall be added to the other votes cast 17 18 within the county.] (Reserved).

19 * * *

20 (q) (1) (i) An absentee ballot cast by any absentee elector as defined in section 1301(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), 21 (g) and (h) [which is received in the office of the county board 22 23 of elections after five o'clock P.M. on the Friday immediately 24 preceding the election and no later than five o'clock P.M. on 25 the seventh day following an election shall be canvassed in 26 accordance with this subsection if the absentee ballot is postmarked no later than the day immediately preceding the 27 28 election.] shall be canvassed in accordance with this section if 29 the ballot is cast, submitted and received in accordance with the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (Public 30

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Law 99-410, 100 Stat. 924) or is received within the time 1 specified for absentee ballots by this section if that time is 2 3 longer. (ii) An absentee ballot cast by an absentee elector as 4 defined in section 1301(i), (j), (k), (l), (m) and (n) shall be 5 canvassed in accordance with this section if the absentee ballot 6 7 is received in the office of the county board of elections by 8 any of the following means: 9 (A) Delivery in-person no later than eight o'clock P.M. on the day of the primary or election. 10 11 (B) First class mail no later than five o'clock P.M. on the 12 seventh day following the election if the absentee ballot is 13 postmarked no later than the day immediately preceding the 14 election. 15 The county board of elections shall meet on the [eighth] (2)16 third day following the election to canvass the absentee ballots 17 received under this subsection and subsection (h)(2) until the 18 deadline for receipt of the absentee ballots. One authorized 19 representative of each candidate in an election and one 20 representative from each political party shall be permitted to remain in the room in which the absentee ballots are canvassed. 21 22 Representatives shall be permitted to challenge any absentee 23 elector in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (3). 24 When the county board meets to canvass absentee ballots (3) 25 under paragraph (2), the board shall examine the declaration on

the envelope of each ballot not set aside under subsection (d) and shall compare the information thereon with that contained in the "Registered Absentee Voters File," the absentee voters' list and/or the "Military Veterans and Emergency Civilians Absentee Voters File," whichever is applicable. If the county board has

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verified the proof of identification as required under this act 1 2 and is satisfied that the declaration is sufficient and the 3 information contained in the "Registered Absentee Voters File," the absentee voters' list and/or the "Military Veterans and 4 Emergency Civilians Absentee Voters File" verifies his right to 5 vote, the county board shall announce the name of the elector 6 7 and shall give any candidate representative or party 8 representative present an opportunity to challenge any absentee 9 elector upon the ground or grounds: (i) that the absentee 10 elector is not a qualified elector; or (ii) that the absentee elector was [within the municipality of his residence on the day 11 of the primary or election during the period the polls were 12 13 open, except where he was in the military service or except in 14 the case where his ballot was obtained for the reason that he was unable to appear personally at the polling place because of 15 16 illness or physical disability; or (iii) that the absentee elector was able to appear personally at the polling place on 17 18 the day of the primary or election during the period the polls 19 were open in the case his ballot was obtained for the reason 20 that he was unable to appear personally at the polling place because of illness or physical disability.] not otherwise 21 qualified to cast an absentee ballot. Upon challenge of any 22 23 absentee elector, as set forth herein, the board shall mark 24 "challenged" on the envelope together with the reasons therefor, 25 and the same shall be set aside unopened pending final 26 determination of the challenge according to the procedure 27 described in paragraph (5).

(4) All absentee ballots not challenged for any of the
reasons provided in paragraph (3) shall be counted and included
with the returns of the applicable election district as follows.

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The county board shall open the envelope of every unchallenged 1 2 absentee elector in such manner as not to destroy the 3 declaration executed thereon. If any of the envelopes on which are printed, stamped or endorsed the words "Official Absentee 4 5 Ballot" contain any extraneous marks or identifying symbols, the envelopes and the ballots contained therein shall be set aside 6 7 and declared void. The county board shall then break the seals 8 of such envelopes, remove the ballots and record the votes.

9 (5) With respect to the challenged ballots, they shall be 10 placed unopened in a secure, safe and sealed container in the 11 custody of the county board until it shall fix a time and place for a formal hearing of all such challenges, and notice shall be 12 13 given where possible to all absentee electors thus challenged 14 and to every individual who made a challenge. The time for the hearing shall not be later than five (5) days after the date of 15 16 the challenge. On the day fixed for said hearing, the county board shall proceed without delay to hear said challenges, and, 17 18 in hearing the testimony, the county board shall not be bound by 19 the Pennsylvania Rules of Evidence. The testimony presented 20 shall be stenographically recorded and made part of the record of the hearing. 21

22 The decision of the county board in upholding or (6) 23 dismissing any challenge may be reviewed by the court of common 24 pleas of the county upon a petition filed by any person 25 aggrieved by the decision of the county board. The appeal shall 26 be taken, within two (2) days after the decision was made, whether the decision was reduced to writing or not, to the court 27 28 of common pleas setting forth the objections to the county 29 board's decision and praying for an order reversing the decision. 30

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1 (7) Pending the final determination of all appeals, the county board shall suspend any action in canvassing and 2 computing all challenged ballots received under this subsection 3 irrespective of whether or not appeal was taken from the county 4 board's decision. Upon completion of the computation of the 5 returns of the county, the votes cast upon the challenged 6 official absentee ballots that have been finally determined to 7 be valid shall be added to the other votes cast within the 8 9 county.

10 * * *

11 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 90 days.