

ASSEMBLY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3591

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 17, 2020

The Assembly State and Local Government Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 3591.

As amended, this bill requires certain information to increase public awareness and use of voting by mail, requires certain mail-in ballots received by county board within 48 hours be considered valid, and requires certain mail-in ballots to be retained.

Under current law, county boards of elections are required to retain voted mail-in ballots for a period of two years. This bill clarifies that ballots that are received 48 hours after the closing of the polls, along with their envelopes, are also required to be retained for two years. As amended, the bill would also require that every mail-in ballot that does not bear a postmark date but that is received by the county board by delivery of the United States Postal Service within 48 hours after the time of the closing of the polls for the election for which the ballot was prepared is to be considered valid and canvassed.

Under the bill, the Secretary of State is required to:

(1) prepare informational posters for use at all polling places that promote voting by mail,

(2) include with mail-in ballots information for the voter on how to check the status of the voter's mail-in ballot, and

(3) provide educational materials to county board of elections employees on the standards for acceptance and rejection of mail-in ballots.

Under the bill, the educational materials prepared by the Secretary of State would serve an educational purpose for the county board and would not replace, supersede, or void the authority of the county board or a judge of the Superior Court to accept or reject a mail-in ballot. This bill also prohibits the rejection of a mail-in ballot due to missing or insufficient glue on an outer or inner envelope.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amended the bill to:

(1) remove section 1 of the bill, which permits the clerk of each county to remove a voter from lists of registered voters receiving mail-in ballots if certain circumstances apply;

(2) clarify that the educational materials prepared by the Secretary of State will serve an educational purpose for the county board and will not replace, supersede, or void the authority of the county board or a judge of the Superior Court to accept or reject a mail-in ballot; and

(3) require that every mail-in ballot that does not bear a postmark date but that is received by the county board by delivery of the United States Postal Service within 48 hours after polls close is to be considered valid and canvassed.