

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 4257

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 6, 2022

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 4257.

This bill allows county boards of elections to begin canvassing early votes cast during the early voting period and mail-in ballots before election day under certain conditions.

Under current law, early votes cast during the early voting period may not be canvassed or counted until the polls close on election day. Similarly, mail-in ballots may begin to be canvassed or counted on election day.

Under this bill, county boards of elections are permitted to begin canvassing each early vote no earlier than 24 hours after the conclusion of the early voting period. The bill also allows county boards of elections to begin opening the inner envelopes and canvassing each mail-in ballot from the inner envelopes no earlier than ten days prior to the day of the election. The bill directs the Secretary of State to establish guidelines concerning the canvassing process to ensure the security and secrecy of the votes cast. The canvassing results would remain confidential and be disclosed only in accordance current law, regulations, and guidelines concerning the disclosure of election results. The bill prohibits the disclosure of the canvassing results prior to the close of polls on the day of the election. Under current law for mail-in ballots, any person who is authorized to receive and canvass completed mail-in-ballots who knowingly discloses to the public the contents of a mail-in ballot prior to the time designated by law for the closing of the polls for each election is guilty of a crime of the third degree. This bill extends the same penalties to the disclosure of early voting results.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This bill is not certified as requiring a fiscal note.