

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 958

Short Title: Election Law Changes. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Blackwell and Stevens (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Election Law, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

April 14, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO MAKE VARIOUS CHANGES TO ELECTION ADMINISTRATION LAWS
AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE LAWS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. G.S. 163-22 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:
"(u) In educating voters, the State Board shall not use its role to recruit or encourage voters to associate with any political party over another or to influence voter turnout for a particular political party."

SECTION 2. G.S. 163-90.2(a) reads as rewritten:
"(a) When any challenge is sustained for any cause listed under G.S. 163-85(c), the board shall cancel or correct the voter registration of the voter. The county board shall maintain such record for at least six months and during the pendency of any appeal. The Except for challenges sustained for cause listed under G.S. 163-85(c)(6), the challenged ballot shall be counted for any ballot items for which the challenged voter is eligible to vote, as if it were a provisional official ballot under the provisions of G.S. 163-166.11(4). For any challenge sustained for death of the voter under G.S. 163-85(c)(6), the challenged ballot shall not be counted if the voter died between the time the ballot was cast and 6:30 A.M. on election day."

SECTION 3.(a) G.S. 163-165.5(a)(4) reads as rewritten:
"(4) Party designations in partisan ballot items. Party designations shall be printed in the same font type and size as the name of the candidate."

SECTION 3.(b) This section becomes effective January 1, 2026, and applies to elections held on or after that date.

SECTION 4. G.S. 163-166.35(a) reads as rewritten:
"(a) A county board ~~of elections~~ by unanimous vote of all its members may provide for one or more sites in that county for ballots to be applied for and cast under this Part. Each county board shall open at least one early voting site for every 30,000 registered voters, or any portion thereof, registered in that county as of July 1 of the previous calendar year. The county board shall seek to provide geographic diversity when selecting locations for early voting sites. Except for individuals appointed to early voting sites pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, every individual staffing any of those sites shall be a member or full-time employee of the county board ~~of elections~~ or an employee of the county board of elections whom the board has given training equivalent to that given a full-time employee. Those sites must be approved by the State Board as part of a Plan for Implementation approved by both the county board of elections and by the State Board which shall also provide adequate security of the ballots and provisions to avoid allowing persons to vote who have already voted. A county board of elections may propose in its



Plan for Implementation not to offer early voting at the county board of elections office; the State Board may approve that proposal in a Plan for Implementation only if the Plan for Implementation includes at least one site reasonably proximate to the county board of elections office and the State Board finds that the sites in the Plan for Implementation as a whole provide adequate coverage of the county's electorate. If a county board of elections has considered a proposed Plan or Plans for Implementation and has been unable to reach unanimity in favor of a Plan for Implementation, a member or members of that county board of elections may petition the State Board to adopt a plan for it. If petitioned, the State Board may also receive and consider alternative petitions from another member or members of that county board. The State Board may adopt a Plan for Implementation for that county. The State Board, in that plan, shall take into consideration whether the Plan for Implementation disproportionately favors any party, racial or ethnic group, or candidate."

SECTION 5. G.S. 163-182.1(b)(1) reads as rewritten:

"(1) Provide for a sample hand-to-eye count of the paper ballots of a statewide ballot item in every county. The presidential ballot item shall be the subject of the sampling in a presidential election. If there is no statewide ballot item, the State Board Auditor shall provide a process for selecting district or local ballot items to adequately sample the electorate. ~~The State Board shall approve in an open meeting the procedure for randomly selecting the sample precincts for each election.~~ The random selection of precincts for any county shall be done publicly after the initial count of election returns for that county is publicly released or 24 hours after the polls close on election day, whichever is earlier. The sample chosen by the State Board Auditor shall be of one or more full precincts, full counts of mailed absentee ballots, full counts of one or more early voting sites, or a combination. The size of the sample of each category shall be chosen to produce a statistically significant result and shall be chosen after consultation with a statistician. The actual units shall be chosen at random. In the event of a material discrepancy between the electronic or mechanical count and a hand-to-eye count, the hand-to-eye count shall control, except where paper ballots have been lost or destroyed or where there is another reasonable basis to conclude that the hand-to-eye count is not the true count. If the discrepancy between the hand-to-eye count and the mechanical or electronic count is significant, a complete hand-to-eye count shall be conducted."

SECTION 6.(a) G.S. 163-182.2(a), as amended by Section 3A.4(e) of S.L. 2024-57, reads as rewritten:

"(a) The initial counting of official ballots cast on election day and under Part 5 of Article 14A of this Chapter shall be conducted according to the following principles:

...

(4) If the county board finds that an individual voting a provisional official ballot (i) was registered in the county as provided in 163-82.1, (ii) voted in the proper precinct under G.S. 163-55 and G.S. 163-57, and (iii) was otherwise eligible to vote, the provisional official ballots shall be counted by the county board no later than 5:00 P.M. on the third business day after the ~~election~~ election; provided, however, for counties with over 250,000 registered voters in that election, the provisional official ballots shall be counted by the county board no later than 5:00 P.M. on the fifth business day after the election. Except as provided in G.S. 163-82.15(e), if the county board finds that an individual voting a provisional official ballot (i) did not vote in the proper precinct under G.S. 163-55 and G.S. 163-57, (ii) is not registered in the county as provided in G.S. 163-82.1, or (iii) is otherwise not eligible to vote, the ballot shall not

be counted. If a voter was properly registered to vote in the election by the county board, no mistake of an election official in giving the voter a ballot or in failing to comply with G.S. 163-82.15 or G.S. 163-166.11 shall serve to prevent the counting of the vote on any ballot item the voter was eligible by registration and qualified by residency to vote.

(5) Precinct officials shall provide a preliminary report of the vote counting on election day to the county board of elections as quickly as possible. The preliminary report ~~shall be unofficial, has shall:~~

a. Be unofficial.

b. Have no binding effect upon the official county canvass to follow, and shall include follow.

c. Include the number of provisional ballots cast in that precinct and the number of outstanding provisional ballots cast in that precinct.

...."

SECTION 6.(b) G.S. 163-234, as amended by Section 3A.4(g) of S.L. 2024-57, reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-234. Counting absentee ballots by county board.

All absentee ballots returned to the county board in the container-return envelopes shall be retained by the county board to be counted by the county board as follows:

...

(2) The county board shall meet at 5:00 P.M. on election day in the county board office or other public location in the county courthouse for the purpose of counting all absentee ballots except those which have been challenged before 5:00 P.M. on election day day, those described in subdivision (13) of this section, and those received pursuant to G.S. 163-231(b)(2). Any elector of the county shall be permitted to attend the meeting and allowed to observe the counting process, so long as the elector does not in any manner interfere with the election officials in the discharge of their duties. The count of these absentee ballots shall be continuous until completed, and the members shall not separate or leave the counting place except for unavoidable necessity.

The county board may begin counting absentee ballots issued under Article 21A of this Chapter between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. and may begin counting all absentee ballots between the hours of 2:00 P.M. and 5:00 P.M. upon the adoption of a resolution at least two weeks prior to the election in which the hour and place of counting absentee ballots shall be stated. A copy of the resolution shall be published once a week for two weeks prior to the election, in a newspaper having general circulation in the county. Notice may additionally be made on a radio or television station or both, but the notice shall be in addition to the newspaper and other required notice. The count shall be continuous until completed and the members shall not separate or leave the counting place except for unavoidable necessity, except that if the count has been completed prior to the time the polls close, it shall be suspended until that time pending receipt of any additional ballots. Nothing in this section prohibits a county board from taking preparatory steps for the count earlier than the times specified in this section, as long as the preparatory steps do not reveal to any individual not engaged in the actual count election results before the times specified in this subdivision for the count to begin. By way of illustration and not limitation, a preparatory step for the count would be the entry of tally cards from direct record electronic voting units into a computer for processing. The county board shall not announce the result of the count before 7:30 P.M.

...

(12) No later than 5:00 P.M. on the third business day after the election, the county board shall announce the tally of all absentee ballots, except those subject to a ~~challenge~~ challenge, those subject to subdivision (13) of this section, or those cast in accordance with Article 21A of this Chapter.

(13) For counties with over 250,000 registered voters in that election, the following shall apply:

a. All absentee ballots received by the county board on the Monday before election day shall be processed no later than 7:30 P.M. the day before election day.

b. The county board shall count and report the results of all absentee ballots received before election day no later than 7:30 P.M. on election day.

c. The county board shall report the number of absentee ballots received on election day no later than 7:30 P.M. on election day.

d. For absentee ballots received on election day, the county board shall count and report the results of those absentee ballots no later than 5:00 P.M. on the fifth business day after the election."

SECTION 7. G.S. 163-230.1(e1), as amended by Section 3A.4(f) of S.L. 2024-57, reads as rewritten:

"(e1) Curable Deficiencies. – If a container-return envelope contains a curable deficiency, the county board shall promptly notify the voter of the deficiency and the manner in which the voter may cure the deficiency. Curable deficiencies are deficiencies that can be cured with supplemental documentation or attestation provided by the voter, including when any of the following occurs:

(1) The voter did not sign the voter certification as required by G.S. 163-231(a)(4).

(2) The voter signed the application in the wrong place on the application.

(3) The voter failed to include with the container-return envelope a photocopy of identification described in G.S. 163-166.16(a) or an affidavit as described in G.S. 163-166.16(d)(1), (d)(2), or (d)(3), as required by subsection (f1) of this section.

The identification of the two persons witnessing the casting of the absentee ballot in accordance with G.S. 163-231(a) is not a curable deficiency. Any container-return envelope with a curable deficiency that is transmitted to the county board shall be considered timely if cure documentation is received no later than ~~12:00~~ 5:00 P.M. on the ~~third~~ fifth business day after the election. Cure documentation may be transmitted via email to the county board if the deficiency is one described in subdivision (3) of this subsection. The notification of voters regarding curable deficiencies is an administrative task that may be performed by county board staff and is not required to be performed at an absentee meeting as provided for in subsection (f) of this section. The voter shall be notified of curable deficiencies by mail, and by telephone or email if the telephone number or email address was provided by the voter on the request form for absentee ballots."

SECTION 8.(a) G.S. 163-278.9 reads as rewritten:

"§ 163-278.9. Statements filed with State Board.

(a) Except as provided in G.S. 163-278.10A, the treasurer of each candidate and of each political committee shall file with the State Board under certification of the treasurer as true and correct to the best of the knowledge of that officer the following reports:

...

(2) 48-Hour Report. – A political committee, political party or affiliated party committee that receives a contribution or transfer of funds shall disclose

1 within 48 hours of receipt a contribution or transfer of ~~one-two~~ thousand
2 dollars ~~(\$1,000)-(\$2,000)~~ or more received before an election but after the
3 period covered by the last report due before that election. The disclosure shall
4 be by report to the State Board identifying the source and amount of the funds.
5 The State Board shall specify the form and manner of making the report,
6 including the reporting of in-kind contributions. The State Board shall
7 increase the dollar amount of the reporting threshold effective each election
8 cycle beginning the period from January 1 of an odd-numbered year through
9 December 31 of the next even-numbered year based on the Consumer Price
10 Index as provided in G.S. 163-278.13(b). The State Board shall set the revised
11 threshold in October of the even-numbered year, publish the revised threshold
12 in the North Carolina Register, and notify the Revisor of Statutes who shall
13 adjust the dollar amount in this subdivision.

14 ...

15 (a1) Subdivision (a)(2) of this section shall not apply to any candidate campaign
16 committee, as defined by G.S. 163-278.38Z, in a primary election in which the candidate is
17 unopposed on that ballot.

18"

19 **SECTION 8.(b)** G.S. 163-278.9A reads as rewritten:

20 **"§ 163-278.9A. Statements filed by referendum committees.**

21 (a) The treasurer of each referendum committee shall file under verification with the
22 Board the following reports:

23 ...

24 (3) 48-Hour Report. – A referendum committee that receives a contribution or
25 transfer of funds shall disclose within 48 hours of receipt a contribution or
26 transfer of ~~one-two~~ thousand dollars ~~(\$1,000)-(\$2,000)~~ or more received before
27 a referendum but after the period covered by the last report due before that
28 referendum. The disclosure shall be by report to the State Board of Elections
29 identifying the source and amount of such funds. The State Board of Elections
30 shall specify the form and manner of making the report, including the
31 reporting of in-kind contributions. The State Board shall increase the dollar
32 amount of the reporting threshold effective each election cycle beginning the
33 period from January 1 of an odd-numbered year through December 31 of the
34 next even-numbered year based on the Consumer Price Index as provided in
35 G.S. 163-278.13(b). The State Board shall set the revised threshold in October
36 of the even-numbered year, publish the revised threshold in the North Carolina
37 Register, and notify the Revisor of Statutes who shall adjust the dollar amount
38 in this subdivision.

39 ...

40 (a1) Subdivision (a)(3) of this section shall not apply to any candidate campaign
41 committee, as defined by G.S. 163-278.38Z, in a primary election in which the candidate is
42 unopposed on that ballot.

43"

44 **SECTION 8.(c)** No earlier than October 1, 2025, the State Board of Elections shall
45 adjust the thresholds imposed by G.S. 163-278.9(a)(2) and G.S. 163-278.9A(a)(3), as enacted by
46 this section, effective for the election cycle beginning January 1, 2027.

47 **SECTION 9.** Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law
48 and applies to elections held on or after that date.