

ELECTIONS REVISIONS

2017 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Brad M. Daw

Senate Sponsor: Deidre M. Henderson

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill changes processes related to elections.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- ▶ creates requirements for an election officer who receives an invalid absentee ballot;
- ▶ changes the time by which a county clerk is required to remove a deceased individual's name from the official register;
- ▶ makes changes to the process by which a paper ballot is adjudicated when a question arises regarding a vote recorded on the paper ballot; and
- ▶ makes technical changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

This bill provides a coordination clause.

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

20A-2-305, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2012, Chapters 33 and 52

20A-3-302, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2015, Chapter 173

20A-3-305, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2016, Chapter 24

20A-4-104, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2006, Chapter 326

20A-4-105, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 390

Utah Code Sections Affected by Coordination Clause:

20A-3-302, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2015, Chapter 173

20A-3-308, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2012, Chapter 309

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **20A-2-305** is amended to read:

20A-2-305. Removing names from the official register -- General requirements.

(1) The county clerk may not remove a voter's name from the official register because the voter has failed to vote in an election.

(2) The county clerk shall remove a voter's name from the official register if:

(a) the voter dies and the requirements of Subsection (3) are met;

(b) the county clerk, after complying with the requirements of Section **20A-2-306**, receives written confirmation from the voter that the voter no longer resides within the county clerk's county;

(c) the county clerk has:

(i) obtained evidence that the voter's residence has changed;

(ii) mailed notice to the voter as required by Section **20A-2-306**;

(iii) (A) received no response from the voter; or

(B) not received information that confirms the voter's residence; and

(iv) the voter has failed to vote or appear to vote in an election during the period beginning on the date of the notice described in Section **20A-2-306** and ending on the day after the date of the second regular general election occurring after the date of the notice;

(d) the voter requests, in writing, that the voter's name be removed from the official register;

(e) the county clerk receives a returned voter identification card, determines that there was no clerical error causing the card to be returned, and has no further information to contact the voter;

(f) the county clerk receives notice that a voter has been convicted of any felony or a misdemeanor for an offense under this title and the voter's right to vote has not been restored as

provided in Section 20A-2-101.3 or 20A-2-101.5; or

(g) the county clerk receives notice that a voter has registered to vote in another state after the day on which the voter registered to vote in this state.

(3) The county clerk shall remove a voter's name from the ~~[registration list within 21 days of receipt of]~~ official register within five business days after the day on which the county clerk receives confirmation from the Department of Health's Bureau of Vital Records that ~~[a]~~ the voter is deceased.

Section 2. Section 20A-3-302 is amended to read:

20A-3-302. Conducting entire election by absentee ballot.

(1) (a) Notwithstanding Section 17B-1-306, an election officer may administer an election entirely by absentee ballot.

(b) An election officer who administers an election entirely by absentee ballot, except for an election conducted under Section 20A-7-609.5, shall, before the following dates, notify the lieutenant governor that the election will be administered entirely by absentee ballot:

(i) February 1 of an even-numbered year if the election is a regular general election; or

(ii) May 1 of an odd-numbered year if the election is a municipal general election.

(2) If the election officer decides to administer an election entirely by absentee ballot, the election officer shall mail to each registered voter within that voting precinct:

(a) an absentee ballot;

(b) for an election administered by a county clerk, information regarding the location and hours of operation of any election day voting center at which the voter may vote;

(c) a courtesy reply mail envelope;

(d) instructions for returning the ballot that include an express notice about any relevant deadlines that the voter must meet in order for the voter's vote to be counted; and

(e) for an election administered by an election officer other than a county clerk, if the election officer does not operate a polling location or an election day voting center, a warning, on a separate page of colored paper in bold face print, indicating that if the voter fails to follow the instructions included with the absentee ballot, the voter will be unable to vote in that

election because there will be no polling place in the voting precinct on the day of the election.

(3) A voter who votes by absentee ballot under this section is not required to apply for an absentee ballot as required by this part.

(4) An election officer who administers an election entirely by absentee ballot shall:

(a) (i) obtain, in person, the signatures of each voter within that voting precinct before the election; or

(ii) obtain the signature of each voter within the voting precinct from the county clerk; and

(b) maintain the signatures on file in the election officer's office.

(5) (a) Upon receiving the returned absentee ballots, the election officer shall compare the signature on each absentee ballot with the voter's signature that is maintained on file and verify that the signatures are the same.

(b) If the election officer questions the authenticity of the signature on the absentee ballot, the election officer shall immediately contact the voter to verify the signature.

(c) If the election ~~official~~ officer determines that the signature on the absentee ballot does not match the voter's signature that is maintained on file, the election officer shall contact the voter by mail, email, or phone, and inform the voter:

(i) that the voter's signature is in question;

(ii) how the voter may resolve the issue;

(iii) that the voter shall sign and deliver an affidavit to the election officer attesting that the voter voted the absentee ballot;

(iv) that the voter shall provide the voter's:

(A) name and date of birth; and

(B) driver license number or the last four digits of the voter's social security number;

and

(v) that by signing the absentee voter affidavit, the voter authorizes the lieutenant governor's and county clerk's use of the applicant's signature on the affidavit for voter identification purposes.

114 (d) A voter whom an election officer contacts under Subsection (5)(c) shall deliver the
115 affidavit described in Subsection (5)(c)(iii) to the election officer.

116 (e) An election officer who receives a signed affidavit under Subsection (5)(d) shall
117 immediately:

118 (i) scan the signature on the affidavit electronically and keep the signature on file in the
119 statewide voter registration database developed under Section 20A-2-109; and

120 ~~[(i) unless the absentee ballot application deadline described in Section 20A-3-304 has~~
121 ~~passed, immediately send another absentee ballot and other voting materials as required by this~~
122 ~~section to the voter; and]~~

123 ~~[(ii) disqualify the initial absentee ballot.]~~

124 (ii) if the canvass has not concluded, count the voter's ballot.

125 (f) An election officer may not count the ballot of a voter to whom the election officer
126 sends the notice described in Subsection (5)(c) if the election officer does not receive a signed
127 affidavit from the voter under Subsection (5)(d) or is not otherwise able to establish contact
128 with the voter to confirm the voter's identity.

129 (6) A county that administers an election entirely by absentee ballot:

130 (a) shall provide at least one election day voting center in accordance with Title 20A,
131 Chapter 3, Part 7, Election Day Voting Center;

132 (b) shall ensure that an election day voting center operated by the county has at least
133 one voting device that is accessible, in accordance with the Help America Vote Act of 2002,
134 Pub. L. No. 107-252, for individuals with disabilities; ~~[and]~~

135 (c) is not required to pay return postage for an absentee ballot~~[-]; and~~

136 (d) is subject to an audit conducted under Subsection (7).

137 (7) (a) The lieutenant governor shall:

138 (i) develop procedures for conducting an audit of affidavit signatures on ballots cast in
139 an election conducted under this section; and

140 (ii) after each primary, general, or special election conducted under this section, select
141 a number of ballots, in varying jurisdictions, to audit in accordance with the procedures

developed under Subsection (7)(a)(i).

(b) The lieutenant governor shall post the results of an audit conducted under this Subsection (7) on the lieutenant governor's website.

Section 3. Section **20A-3-305** is amended to read:

20A-3-305. Mailing of ballot to voter -- Enclose self-addressed envelope -- Affidavit.

(1) (a) Upon timely receipt of an absentee voter application properly filled out and signed less than 30 days before the election, the election officer shall either:

(i) give the applicant an official absentee ballot and envelope to vote in the office; or
(ii) mail an official absentee ballot, postage paid, to the absentee voter and enclose an envelope printed as required in Subsection (2).

(b) No later than 21 days before election day, the election officer shall mail an official absentee ballot, postage paid, to all absentee voters, other than to a uniformed-service voter or an overseas voter, who have submitted a properly filled out and signed absentee voter application before the day on which the ballots are mailed and enclose an envelope printed as required by Subsection (2).

(2) The election officer shall ensure that:

(a) the name, official title, and post office address of the election officer is printed on the front of the envelope; and

(b) the following is printed on the back of the envelope:

~~[(b)]~~ (i) a printed affidavit in substantially the following form ~~[is printed on the back of the envelope]~~:

"County of _____ State of _____

I, _____, solemnly swear that: I am a qualified resident voter of the _____ voting precinct in _____ County, Utah and that I am entitled to vote in that voting precinct at the next election.

I am not a convicted felon currently incarcerated for commission of a felony.

Signature of Absentee Voter"; and

170 (ii) a warning that the affidavit must be signed by the individual to whom the ballot
171 was sent and that the ballot will not be counted if the signature on the affidavit does not match
172 the signature on file with the election officer of the individual to whom the ballot was sent.

173 (3) If the election officer determines that the absentee voter is required to show valid
174 voter identification, the election officer shall:

175 (a) issue the voter a provisional ballot in accordance with Section 20A-3-105.5;

176 (b) instruct the voter to include a copy of the voter's valid voter identification with the
177 return ballot;

178 (c) provide the voter clear instructions on how to vote a provisional ballot; and

179 (d) comply with the requirements of Subsection (2).

180 Section 4. Section 20A-4-104 is amended to read:

181 **20A-4-104. Counting ballots electronically.**

182 (1) (a) Before beginning to count [~~ballot sheets~~] ballots using automatic tabulating
183 equipment, the election officer shall test the automatic tabulating equipment to ensure that it
184 will accurately count the votes cast for all offices and all measures.

185 (b) The election officer shall publish public notice of the time and place of the test at
186 least 48 hours before the test in one or more daily or weekly newspapers of general circulation
187 published in the county, municipality, or jurisdiction where the equipment is used.

188 (c) The election officer shall conduct the test by processing a preaudited group of
189 [~~ballot sheets~~] ballots.

190 (d) The election officer shall ensure that:

191 (i) a predetermined number of valid votes for each candidate and measure are recorded
192 on the [~~ballot sheets~~] ballots;

193 (ii) for each office, one or more ballot sheets have votes in excess of the number
194 allowed by law in order to test the ability of the automatic tabulating equipment to reject those
195 votes; and

196 (iii) a different number of valid votes are assigned to each candidate for an office, and
197 for and against each measure.

(e) If any error is detected, the election officer shall determine the cause of the error and correct it.

(f) The election officer shall ensure that:

(i) the automatic tabulating equipment produces an errorless count before beginning the actual counting; and

(ii) the automatic tabulating equipment passes the same test at the end of the count before the election returns are approved as official.

(2) (a) The election officer or his designee shall supervise and direct all proceedings at the counting center.

(b) (i) Proceedings at the counting center are public and may be observed by interested persons.

(ii) Only those persons authorized to participate in the count may touch any ballot[; ~~ballot sheet~~], or return.

(c) The election officer shall deputize and administer an oath or affirmation to all persons who are engaged in processing and counting the ballots that they will faithfully perform their assigned duties.

(d) (i) Counting poll watchers appointed as provided in Section 20A-3-201 may observe the testing of equipment and actual counting of the [~~ballot sheets~~] ballots.

(ii) Those counting poll watchers may make independent tests of the equipment before or after the vote count as long as the testing does not interfere in any way with the official tabulation of the [~~ballot sheets~~] ballots.

(3) If any ballot [~~sheet~~] is damaged or defective so that it cannot properly be counted by the automatic tabulating equipment, the election officer shall ensure that two counting judges jointly:

(a) [~~cause~~] create a true duplicate copy of the ballot [~~sheet to be made~~] with an identifying serial number;

(b) substitute the duplicate ballot for the damaged or defective ballot [~~sheet~~];

(c) label the duplicate ballot [~~card~~] "duplicate"; and

(d) record the duplicate [~~ballot sheet's~~] ballot's serial number on the damaged or defective ballot [~~sheet~~].

(4) The election officer may:

(a) conduct an unofficial count before conducting the official count in order to provide early unofficial returns to the public;

(b) release unofficial returns from time to time after the polls close; and

(c) report the progress of the count for each candidate during the actual counting of ballots.

(5) The election officer shall review and evaluate the provisional ballot envelopes and prepare any valid provisional ballots for counting as provided in Section 20A-4-107.

(6) (a) The election officer or his designee shall:

(i) separate, count, and tabulate any ballots containing valid write-in votes; and

(ii) complete the standard form provided by the clerk for recording valid write-in votes.

(b) In counting the write-in votes, if, by casting a valid write-in vote, a voter has cast more votes for an office than that voter is entitled to vote for that office, the poll workers shall count the valid write-in vote as being the obvious intent of the voter.

(7) (a) The election officer shall certify the return printed by the automatic tabulating equipment, to which have been added write-in and absentee votes, as the official return of each voting precinct.

(b) Upon completion of the count, the election officer shall make official returns open to the public.

(8) If for any reason it becomes impracticable to count all or a part of the [~~ballot sheets~~] ballots with tabulating equipment, the election officer may direct that they be counted manually according to the procedures and requirements of this part.

(9) After the count is completed, the election officer shall seal and retain the programs, test materials, and ballots as provided in Section 20A-4-202.

Section 5. Section 20A-4-105 is amended to read:

20A-4-105. Standards and requirements for evaluating voter's ballot choices.

254 ~~[(1) Each person counting ballots shall apply the standards and requirements of this~~
255 ~~section to resolve any questions that arise as ballots are counted.]~~

256 (1) (a) An election officer shall ensure that when a question arises regarding a vote
257 recorded on a paper ballot, two counting judges jointly adjudicate the ballot in accordance with
258 the requirements of this section.

259 (b) If the counting judges disagree on the disposition of a vote recorded on a ballot that
260 is adjudicated under this section, the counting judges may not count the vote.

261 (2) Except as provided in Subsection (11), if a voter marks more names than there are
262 [persons] individuals to be elected to an office, or if [for any reason it is impossible to
263 determine the choice of any voter for any office to be filled, the counter may not count that
264 voter's ballot for that office.] the counting judges cannot determine a voter's choice for an
265 office, the counting judges may not count the voter's vote for that office.

266 (3) The [counter] counting judges shall count a defective or incomplete mark on [any]
267 a paper ballot if:

268 (a) [it] the defective or incomplete mark is in the proper place; and

269 (b) there is no other mark or cross on the [paper] ballot indicating the voter's intent to
270 vote other than as indicated by the incomplete or defective mark.

271 (4) (a) When [the] a voter has marked [the] a ballot so that it appears that the voter has
272 voted more than one straight ticket, the [election] counting judges may not count any votes on
273 the ballot for party candidates.

274 (b) The [election] counting judges shall count the remainder of the ballot if [it] the
275 remainder of the ballot is voted correctly.

276 (5) [A counter] The counting judges may not reject a ballot marked by the voter
277 because of marks on the ballot other than those marks allowed by this section unless the
278 extraneous marks on a ballot [or group of ballots] show an intent by [a person or group to mark
279 their ballots so that their ballots] an individual to mark the individual's ballot so that the
280 individual's ballot can be identified.

281 (6) (a) In counting the ballots, the [counters] counting judges shall give full

consideration to the intent of the voter.

(b) The ~~[counters]~~ counting judges may not invalidate a ballot because of mechanical ~~[and]~~ or technical defects in voting or failure on the part of the voter to follow strictly the rules for balloting required by Chapter 3, Voting.

(7) The ~~[counters]~~ counting judges may not reject a ballot because of ~~[any]~~ an error in:

(a) stamping or writing ~~[any]~~ an official endorsement; or

(b) delivering the wrong ballots to ~~[any]~~ a polling place.

(8) The ~~[counter]~~ counting judges may not count ~~[any]~~ a paper ballot that does not have the official endorsement by an election officer.

(9) The ~~[counter]~~ counting judges may not count ~~[any]~~ a ballot proposition vote or candidate vote for which the voter is not ^[u]legally entitled to vote^[u], as ~~[used]~~ defined in Section 20A-4-107.

(10) If the ~~[counter discovers]~~ counting judges discover that the name of a candidate ~~[voted for]~~ is misspelled on a ballot, or that the initial letters of a candidate's given name are transposed or omitted in ~~[part or altogether, the counter]~~ whole or in part on a ballot, the counting judges shall count ~~[the]~~ a voter's vote for ~~[that]~~ the candidate if it is apparent that the voter intended to vote for ~~[that]~~ the candidate.

(11) The ~~[counter]~~ counting judges shall count a vote for the president and the vice president of any political party as a vote for the presidential electors selected by the political party.

(12) In counting the valid write-in votes, if, by casting a valid write-in vote, a voter has cast more votes for an office than that voter is entitled to vote for that office, the counting judges shall count the valid write-in vote as being the obvious intent of the voter.

Section 6. Coordinating H.B. 230 with H.B. 12 -- Substantive and technical amendments.

If this H.B. 230 and H.B. 12, Disposition of Ballots Amendments, both pass and become law, it is the intent of the Legislature that the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel prepare the Utah Code database for publication as follows:

(1) Section [20A-3-302](#) is amended to read:

"20A-3-302. Conducting entire election by absentee ballot.

(1) (a) Notwithstanding Section [17B-1-306](#), an election officer may administer an election entirely by absentee ballot.

(b) An election officer who administers an election entirely by absentee ballot, except for an election conducted under Section [20A-7-609.5](#), shall, before the following dates, notify the lieutenant governor that the election will be administered entirely by absentee ballot:

(i) February 1 of an even-numbered year if the election is a regular general election; or

(ii) May 1 of an odd-numbered year if the election is a municipal general election.

(2) If the election officer decides to administer an election entirely by absentee ballot, the election officer shall mail to each registered voter within that voting precinct:

(a) an absentee ballot;

(b) for an election administered by a county clerk, information regarding the location and hours of operation of any election day voting center at which the voter may vote;

(c) a courtesy reply mail envelope;

(d) instructions for returning the ballot that include an express notice about any relevant deadlines that the voter must meet in order for the voter's vote to be counted; and

(e) for an election administered by an election officer other than a county clerk, if the election officer does not operate a polling location or an election day voting center, a warning, on a separate page of colored paper in bold face print, indicating that if the voter fails to follow the instructions included with the absentee ballot, the voter will be unable to vote in that election because there will be no polling place in the voting precinct on the day of the election.

(3) A voter who votes by absentee ballot under this section is not required to apply for an absentee ballot as required by this part.

(4) An election officer who administers an election entirely by absentee ballot shall:

(a) (i) obtain, in person, the signatures of each voter within that voting precinct before the election; or

(ii) obtain the signature of each voter within the voting precinct from the county clerk;

and

(b) maintain the signatures on file in the election officer's office.

(5) ~~[(a)] Upon [receiving the returned absentee ballots]~~ receipt of a returned absentee ballot, the election officer shall ~~[compare the signature on each absentee ballot with the voter's signature that is maintained on file and verify that the signatures are the same]~~ review and process the ballot under Section 20A-3-308.

~~[(b) If the election officer questions the authenticity of the signature on the absentee ballot, the election officer shall immediately contact the voter to verify the signature.]~~

~~[(c) If the election official determines that the signature on the absentee ballot does not match the voter's signature that is maintained on file, the election officer shall:]~~

~~[(i) unless the absentee ballot application deadline described in Section 20A-3-304 has passed, immediately send another absentee ballot and other voting materials as required by this section to the voter; and]~~

~~[(ii) disqualify the initial absentee ballot.]~~

(6) A county that administers an election entirely by absentee ballot:

(a) shall provide at least one election day voting center in accordance with Title 20A, Chapter 3, Part 7, Election Day Voting Center;

(b) shall ensure that an election day voting center operated by the county has at least one voting device that is accessible, in accordance with the Help America Vote Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-252, for individuals with disabilities; ~~[and]~~

(c) is not required to pay return postage for an absentee ballot~~[-]; and~~

(d) is subject to an audit conducted under Subsection (7).

(7) (a) The lieutenant governor shall:

(i) develop procedures for conducting an audit of affidavit signatures on ballots cast in an election conducted under this section; and

(ii) after each primary, general, or special election conducted under this section, select a number of ballots, in varying jurisdictions, to audit in accordance with the procedures developed under Subsection (7)(a)(i).

(b) The lieutenant governor shall post the results of an audit conducted under this Subsection (7) on the lieutenant governor's website."; and

(2) Subsections 20A-3-308(5) through (9) are amended to read:

~~"[(5) (a) An election officer shall notify a voter if a poll worker rejects the voter's ballot and specify the reason for the rejection.]~~

~~[(b) An election officer shall give the notice described in Subsection (5)(a) to a voter no later than seven days after:]~~

~~[(i) election day if the election officer receives the ballot before or on election day, and]~~

~~[(ii) the canvass if the election officer receives the ballot after election day and before the end of the canvass.]~~

(5) (a) If the election officer rejects an individual's absentee ballot because the election officer determines that the signature on the ballot does not match the individual's signature that is maintained on file, the election officer shall contact the individual in accordance with Subsection (7) by mail, email, text message, or phone, and inform the individual:

(i) that the individual's signature is in question;

(ii) how the individual may resolve the issue;

(iii) that, in order for the ballot to be counted, the individual is required to deliver to the election officer a correctly completed affidavit, provided by the county clerk, that meets the requirements described in Subsection (5)(b).

(b) An affidavit described in Subsection (5)(a)(iii) shall include:

(i) an attestation that the individual voted the absentee ballot;

(ii) a space for the individual to enter the individual's name, date of birth, and driver license number or the last four digits of the individual's social security number;

(iii) a space for the individual to sign the affidavit; and

(iv) a statement that, by signing the affidavit, the individual authorizes the lieutenant governor's and county clerk's use of the individual's signature on the affidavit for voter identification purposes.

394 (c) In order for an individual described in Subsection (5)(a) to have the individual's
395 ballot counted, the individual shall deliver the affidavit described in Subsection (5)(b) to the
396 election officer.

397 (d) An election officer who receives a signed affidavit under Subsection (5)(c) shall
398 immediately:

399 (i) scan the signature on the affidavit electronically and keep the signature on file in the
400 statewide voter registration database developed under Section [20A-2-109](#); and

401 (ii) if the canvass has not concluded, count the individual's ballot.

402 (6) An election officer who rejects an individual's absentee ballot for any reason, other
403 than the reason described in Subsection (5)(a), shall notify the individual of the rejection in
404 accordance with Subsection (7) by mail, email, text message, or phone and specify the reason
405 for the rejection.

406 (7) An election officer who is required to give notice under Subsection (5) or (6) shall
407 give the notice no later than:

408 (a) if the election officer rejects the absentee ballot before election day:

409 (i) one business day after the day on which the election officer rejects the absentee
410 ballot, if the election officer gives the notice by email or text message; or

411 (ii) two business days after the day on which the election officer rejects the absentee
412 ballot, if the election officer gives the notice by postal mail or phone;

413 (b) seven days after election day if the election officer rejects the absentee ballot on
414 election day; or

415 (c) seven days after the canvass if the election officer rejects the absentee ballot after
416 election day and before the end of the canvass.

417 (8) An election officer may not count the absentee ballot of an individual whom the
418 election officer contacts under Subsection (5) or (6) unless the election officer receives a signed
419 affidavit from the individual under Subsection (5)(b) or is otherwise able to establish contact
420 with the individual to confirm the individual's identity.

421 ~~[(6)]~~ (9) The election officer shall retain and preserve the absentee voter envelopes in

422 the manner provided by law for the retention and preservation of official ballots voted at that
423 election.".