

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Allow Voting by Mail

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 21-A MRSA §671-A is enacted to read:

§ 671-A. Voting by mail

Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, beginning November 1, 2020, all elections for President of the United States, United States Senator, United States Representative to Congress, Governor, State Senator and State Representative and on referendum questions must be conducted by mail.

Sec. 2. Commission to Implement Voting by Mail established. The Commission to Implement Voting by Mail, referred to in this section as "the commission," is established.

1. Membership. The commission consists of 7 members as follows:

- A. Two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate, including a member from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;
- B. Three members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, including members from each of the 2 parties holding the largest number of seats in the Legislature;
- C. The Secretary of State or the secretary's designee; and
- D. The Attorney General or the Attorney General's designee.

2. Chairs. The first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the commission.

3. Appointments; convening of commission. All appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this section. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. When the appointment of all members has been completed, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the commission. If 30 days or more after the effective date of this section a majority of but not all appointments have been made, the chairs may request authority and the Legislative Council may grant authority for the commission to meet and conduct its business.

4. Duties. The commission shall make recommendations for implementing voting by mail in the State for all primary and general elections for President of the United States, United States Senator, United States Representative to Congress, Governor, State Senator and State Representative as well as all elections on people's veto questions, initiated measures, bond issues, constitutional amendments and other legislatively proposed referenda. Prior to making its recommendations, the commission shall examine the laws, rules and implementation of voting by mail in Oregon and gather information on past or current proposals for voting by mail in other states.

The commission's recommendations must, at a minimum, address the following aspects of the voting by mail system:

- A. Deadlines for voter registration and enrollment;
- B. Processes for periodic verification and correction of voter mailing addresses, including a process for individuals who are homeless or who do not have access to mail service from the United States Postal Service to participate in the elections;
- C. Processes and deadlines for mailing ballots to voters and for voters to return completed ballots by hand or by mail;
- D. Criteria and processes for in-person voting on election day as an alternative to voting by mail; and
- E. Processes for ensuring the integrity of ballots, including verification of voter signatures, challenges to voter signatures and validation of challenged ballots by voters.

5. Staff assistance. The Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the commission.

6. Report. No later than December 4, 2019, the commission shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. The Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs may report out legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 129th Legislature based upon the report.

SUMMARY

This bill requires that, beginning November 1, 2020, all primary and general elections for President of the United States, United States Senator, United States Representative to Congress, Governor, State Senator and State Representative as well as all elections on people's veto questions, initiated measures, bond issues, constitutional amendments and other legislatively proposed referenda be conducted by mail. The bill also establishes the Commission to Implement Voting by Mail to make recommendations, including proposed legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, which may report out legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 129th Legislature for implementing voting by mail.