



Septemeber 5, 2020

The Senate met on Wednesday, September 2, and passed election reform measures; their bill now goes to the House on September 15. The Senate bill is an improvement but **a lot less than we have asked for, a lot less than the SEC and SCARE asked for, and in some ways more restrictive than current law.** You can read the bill [here](#), and see below for details.

On Friday, Sept. 4, the State Election Commission (SEC) distributed its new and very helpful [FAQ sheet](#) answering common questions about the election process. It reflects CURRENT LAW. This is all that is possible at present, since we cannot know what the General Assembly will do until the House acts, and even then there may be a return to the Senate if the House does not adopt the Senate bill as amended.

We strongly encourage everyone to use the SEC FAQs to avoid confusion, but keep in mind that we are waiting to see what changes, if any, the General Assembly or courts will make.

An infographic with a purple and grey background. On the left, the LWV logo is at the top, followed by the text "Our election must be Safe! Accessible! Secure!". On the right, a list of four goals is presented, each preceded by a yellow star icon. The background features a faint map of South Carolina.

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Our election must be
Safe!
Accessible!
Secure!

- ★ **Expanded absentee voting**
- ★ **Additional days for counting ballots**
- ★ **Venues & staff for all local polling places**
- ★ **PPE and safety measures for staff & voters**

THE SENATE BILL INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING IMPORTANT MEASURES:

Improvements:

- The bill **expands eligibility for absentee voting** to all qualified electors.
- The bill requires that the SEC conduct an “**aggressive voter education program**” concerning the election process.

Disappointments:

- The bill allows opening and examination of outer envelopes of absentee-by-mail ballots beginning Sunday, November 1, at 7:00 AM, which is two days extra before election day, **but less than is needed.**
- The bill requires that absentee-by-mail ballots be returned by mail or delivered personally by an elector or authorized representative to election officials or staff at a central elections office or at a staffed satellite voting office. **This eliminates the use of drop boxes.**
- The bill establishes October 5 as the start date for early voting. **SEC had planned to start this on September 28.**
- **The bill does not remove the requirement of a witness signature on the ballot envelope.**

While we appreciate the positive elements of this bill, the restrictive measures and failure to enact other useful changes are built around misinformation, and even intentional disinformation, on election security issues. **We hope to encourage the House to moderate these measures when they return on September 15.**

BEST UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION

For now, please do consult the State Election Commission FAQs [here](#) to avoid confusion.

While we encourage absentee-by-mail, we also encourage voters to **consider in-**

person absentee options. This is important not just because the US Postal Service is experiencing difficulties, but also because people without access to broadband and the internet may find early in-person voting less challenging than mail-in. Lack of internet connectivity compromises not just access to instructions, but the ability to go online to verify the status of absentee-by-mail ballot applications and ballots. The early in-person absentee voting is a great option!

The SEC has indicated that they will post absentee in-person voting locations at scvotes.org as soon as the information becomes available.

Thank you all for everything you have been doing. While the Senate bill is very disappointing, it is unlikely that we would have any safety measures from them if LWV members and other citizens hadn't joined together and told senators that the election must be safe, secure, and accessible!

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