

AN ACT

relating to voting by voters with certain disabilities or voters who reside at a residential care facility.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 63, Election Code, is amended by adding Section 63.0013 to read as follows:

Sec. 63.0013. ACCEPTING VOTERS WITH CERTAIN DISABILITIES.

(a) In this section, "mobility problem that substantially impairs a person's ability to ambulate" has the meaning assigned by Section 681.001, Transportation Code.

(b) An election officer may accept a person with a mobility problem that substantially impairs a person's ability to ambulate who is offering to vote before accepting others offering to vote at the polling place who arrived before the person.

(c) Notice of the priority given to persons with a mobility problem that substantially impairs a person's ability to ambulate shall be posted:

(1) at one or more locations in each polling place where it can be read by persons waiting to vote;

(2) on the Internet website of the secretary of state;
and

(3) on each Internet website relating to elections maintained by a county.

(d) The notice required by Subsection (c) must read:

1 "Pursuant to Section 63.0013, Election Code, an election officer
2 may give voting order priority to individuals with a mobility
3 problem that substantially impairs the person's ability to move
4 around. A person assisting an individual with a mobility problem
5 may also, at the individual's request, be given voting order
6 priority. Disabilities and conditions that may qualify you for
7 voting order priority include paralysis, lung disease, the use of
8 portable oxygen, cardiac deficiency, severe limitation in the
9 ability to walk due to arthritic, neurological, or orthopedic
10 condition, wheelchair confinement, arthritis, foot disorder, the
11 inability to walk 200 feet without stopping to rest, or use of a
12 brace, cane, crutch, or other assistive device."

13 (e) A person assisting a voter in accordance with Section
14 64.032(c) may be accepted to vote concurrently with a person
15 accepted under Subsection (b) of this section at the voter's
16 request.

17 SECTION 2. Section 86.003, Election Code, is amended by
18 amending Subsections (a) and (b) and adding Subsection (e) to read
19 as follows:

20 (a) The balloting materials for voting by mail shall be
21 provided to the voter by mail, unless the ballot is delivered to a
22 voter for early voting under Chapter 107. A ballot provided by any
23 other method may not be counted.

24 (b) Subject to Subsection (c), the balloting materials
25 shall be addressed to the applicable address specified in the
26 voter's application. The election officer providing the ballot may
27 not knowingly deliver ~~mail~~ the materials to an address other than

1 that prescribed by this section.

2 (e) A voter who makes an application to vote early by mail on
3 the grounds of age or disability requesting that the ballot be sent
4 to the address of a residential care facility, as defined by Chapter
5 107, is required to vote as provided by that chapter if five or more
6 applications for ballots to be voted by mail are made by residents
7 of the same facility who request that the ballots be sent to that
8 facility.

9 SECTION 3. Section 86.004, Election Code, is amended by
10 amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsection (c) to read as
11 follows:

12 (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) or (c), the
13 balloting materials for voting by mail shall be mailed to a voter
14 entitled to vote by mail not later than the seventh calendar day
15 after the later of the date the clerk accepts the voter's
16 application for a ballot to be voted by mail or the date the ballots
17 become available for mailing, except that if that mailing date is
18 earlier than the 45th day before election day, the balloting
19 materials shall be mailed not later than the 38th day before
20 election day.

21 (c) An application to vote early by mail on the grounds of
22 age or disability requesting that the ballot be sent to the address
23 of a residential care facility, as defined by Chapter 107, shall be
24 held until the earlier of:

25 (1) the date on which five or more applications for
26 ballots to be voted by mail made by residents of the same facility
27 who request that the ballots be sent to that facility have been

1 received, in which case ballots may not be mailed to the voters and
2 voting shall be conducted under Chapter 107; or

3 (2) the last day on which an application for a ballot
4 to be voted by mail may be received, after which the ballot shall
5 promptly be mailed to the voter.

6 SECTION 4. Subtitle B, Title 7, Election Code, is amended by
7 adding Chapter 107 to read as follows:

8 CHAPTER 107. EARLY VOTING AT A RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY

9 Sec. 107.001. PURPOSE. This chapter is enacted to
10 facilitate voting in a nursing home, other long-term care facility,
11 or retirement center in which a significant number of occupants,
12 patients, or residents lack adequate transportation to an
13 appropriate polling place, need assistance in voting, are 65 years
14 of age or older or are disabled, or are indefinitely confined.

15 Sec. 107.002. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "residential
16 care facility" means a facility licensed and regulated under
17 Chapter 242 or 247, Health and Safety Code, with more than 10 beds.

18 Sec. 107.003. APPLICABILITY OF EARLY VOTING BY PERSONAL
19 APPEARANCE PROVISIONS. To the extent applicable and not in
20 conflict with this chapter, Chapter 85 applies to voting at a
21 residential care facility under this chapter.

22 Sec. 107.004. EARLY VOTING AT RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY
23 REQUIRED. (a) A voter residing in a residential care facility who
24 has applied to vote early by mail on the grounds of age or
25 disability and who requested that the ballot be sent to the address
26 of the facility, must vote as provided by this chapter if five or
27 more applications for ballots to be voted by mail were made by

1 residents of the same facility who requested that the ballots be
2 sent to the facility.

3 (b) If a residential care facility has fewer than five
4 residents qualified to vote under this chapter on January 1 of each
5 calendar year, the secretary of state may exempt a residential care
6 facility from the requirements of this chapter. For this exemption
7 to apply, the Department of State Health Services and the facility
8 director must provide written confirmation that the exemption
9 applies to the residential care facility. The secretary of state
10 shall adopt rules to implement this subsection.

11 Sec. 107.005. ELECTION JUDGES; QUALIFICATIONS; OATH.

12 (a) Additional election judges shall be selected to serve at a
13 residential care facility in the same manner as election judges are
14 selected to serve at a polling place for early voting by personal
15 appearance under Chapter 32. The county chair of a political party
16 shall indicate on the list of names of persons whether a person is
17 willing to serve as an election judge under this chapter.

18 (b) An election judge serving at a residential care facility
19 may be a volunteer, an employee of the authority conducting the
20 election, or compensated by the authority conducting the election
21 in the same manner as an election judge for a polling place for
22 early voting by personal appearance.

23 (c) A person may not serve as an election judge for a
24 residential care facility if at any time during the two years
25 preceding the election, the person has been employed at a
26 residential care facility in the county where the person seeks to
27 serve as an election judge.

1 (d) Before beginning the duties of an election judge under
2 this chapter, each individual appointed to serve as an election
3 judge at a residential care facility shall sign and date this oath:

4 I swear (or affirm) that I will not in any manner request or
5 seek to persuade or induce any voter to vote for or against any
6 candidate or measure to be voted on, and that I will faithfully
7 perform my duty as an officer of the election and guard the purity
8 of the election.

9 I have read the statutes and training materials provided and
10 will conduct this election accordingly.

11 I understand that failing to follow procedures exactly may
12 result in invalidation of the voter's ballot.

13 I will not unduly influence or pressure a person to
14 participate or cast a ballot in the election.

15 I will not influence the choice of a voter to choose a
16 particular primary ballot, vote in a particular race or election,
17 or vote on a particular proposition.

18 Signed this ___ day of ____, 20__.

19 Date: _____

20 (e) The secretary of state shall provide training for an
21 election judge serving under this section.

22 Sec. 107.006. VOTING LOCATION. (a) The administrator of
23 the residential care facility shall make available an area located
24 in a common area of the facility for the purposes of voting under
25 this chapter. The area shall allow a voter to cast a secret ballot.

26 (b) The facility administrator shall allow posting of
27 required notices during the period that voting is conducted under

1 this chapter.

2 (c) An election judge may enter the private room of a voter
3 who requests that balloting materials be brought to the voter.

4 Sec. 107.007. NOTICE OF ELECTION IN RESIDENTIAL CARE
5 FACILITY; DETERMINATION OF TIME FOR VOTING. (a) If early voting
6 at a residential care facility is required under this chapter, the
7 early voting clerk shall give notice that early voting will occur at
8 the facility and appoint election judges for the purpose of
9 conducting voting under this chapter.

10 (b) Not later than 5 p.m. on the sixth business day before
11 election day, the election judges shall, with the input of the
12 administrator of the residential care facility, designate one or
13 more times for voting to be conducted. Voting may be conducted not
14 earlier than the 29th day before election day and not later than the
15 fourth day preceding election day.

16 (c) Notice of the time or times for conducting the election
17 shall be posted at the residential care facility by the election
18 judge and on the appropriate county's Internet website as soon as
19 practicable after determining the time and not later than the fifth
20 day before the first day on which voting will be conducted at the
21 facility.

22 (d) The early voting clerk shall maintain a public list of
23 all residential care facilities in the clerk's jurisdiction at
24 which voting is conducted under this chapter. The list must be
25 available on the website of the authority conducting the election
26 or posted at the location where public notices are posted in the
27 county courthouse or authority public building, as applicable, and

1 for each facility state:

2 (1) the name of the facility;

3 (2) the address of the facility;

4 (3) the dates and times for voting at the facility; and

5 (4) the names of the election judges for the facility.

6 (e) The secretary of state with the assistance of the
7 Department of State Health Services shall create a list of all
8 residential care facilities eligible under this chapter on January
9 1 of each calendar year in an early voting clerk's jurisdiction.
10 The secretary of state shall provide the list to the early voting
11 clerk.

12 (f) At any time during the year and regardless of whether
13 five or more voters at a residential care facility have requested
14 ballots to be voted by mail, the early voting clerk may post notice
15 of the dates on which voting will be conducted at the facility under
16 this chapter for each election. If the early voting clerk posts
17 notice under this subsection, the names of the election judges and
18 the hours during which voting will be conducted must be posted at
19 least 48 hours before voting is conducted at the facility,
20 notwithstanding Subsection (c).

21 Sec. 107.008. CONDUCT OF ELECTION. (a) In an election
22 conducted under this chapter, the early voting clerk shall deliver
23 to the election judges for a residential care facility the
24 balloting materials for any qualified voters who have requested a
25 mail ballot for an election that would have been otherwise mailed to
26 the voter at the facility under Chapter 86.

27 (b) The election judges for a residential care facility

1 shall deliver the balloting materials to the voter at the facility.

2 (c) The voter shall mark and seal the ballot in the same
3 manner as a voter voting under Chapter 86.

4 (d) Both election judges for the residential care facility
5 shall sign the carrier envelope as witnesses. In the space for the
6 address of the witness, each election judge shall write in
7 "Residential Care Facility Election Judge."

8 (e) The election judges shall accept the carrier envelope
9 and place the envelope in a secure bag or ballot container for
10 transport to the early voting clerk's office.

11 (f) Ballots voted at a residential care facility shall be
12 processed for counting in the manner provided by Chapter 86 for a
13 ballot voted by mail.

14 Sec. 107.009. VOTING BY ADDITIONAL QUALIFIED VOTERS.

15 (a) The early voting clerk shall produce a list of all additional
16 qualified voters who reside and are registered to vote at a
17 residential care facility where voting is conducted under this
18 chapter.

19 (b) The clerk shall supply the election judges for the
20 residential care facility with sufficient additional ballots and
21 voting materials to allow any additional qualified voter who
22 resides at the facility to vote under this chapter. During the
23 voting period, any registered voter who resides at the facility may
24 complete an application to request a mail ballot as if they were
25 voting by mail. An election judge for the facility shall serve as a
26 witness for any person who is unable to sign their name and may
27 witness multiple applications.

1 (c) An election judge for the residential care facility must
2 accept a properly completed application for a ballot made under
3 this section, and shall provide a ballot to the voter. The election
4 judge shall make a notation on an application that it was made under
5 this section.

6 (d) A voter who applies for a ballot under this section
7 shall vote in the manner provided by Section 107.008, except that
8 the voter's ballot must be stored with the voter's application, and
9 the voter's ballot may not be counted if the voter was not a
10 qualified voter for the election as demonstrated from the
11 information contained in the voter's application.

12 (e) An election judge at the residential care facility may
13 assist and witness a ballot received by a voter who resides at the
14 facility and is not registered to vote at the facility while the
15 election judge is present at the facility.

16 (f) The secretary of state may prescribe an application for
17 a voter to request a ballot under Subsection (b).

18 Sec. 107.010. RETENTION OF RECORDS. (a) The election
19 judges for the residential care facility shall record the number of
20 ballots voted. Both of the election judges for each facility and
21 the early voting clerk shall sign and attest to the number of
22 ballots issued.

23 (b) On completion of voting under this chapter, the election
24 judges must record the number of:

25 (1) completed ballots;

26 (2) spoiled ballots; and

27 (3) unused returned ballots.

1 Sec. 107.011. PROOF OF IDENTIFICATION PRESENTED AT
2 RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITY. (a) Notwithstanding Section 63.0101
3 or any other law, a voter voting under this chapter may submit a
4 statement as proof of identification signed by both election judges
5 for the residential care facility that:

6 (1) contains the name and address of the voter; and

7 (2) verifies that the voter is a resident of the
8 facility and appears on the list of registered voters.

9 (b) The election judges shall enclose the statement in the
10 carrier envelope.

11 Sec. 107.012. ASSISTING VOTER; NOTICE. (a) On written
12 request to the early voting clerk by a relative of a registered
13 voter in a residential care facility, the clerk may notify the
14 relative of the time or times at which election judges will conduct
15 voting at the facility. The relative may be present at the facility
16 while voting is conducted.

17 (b) A voter may receive assistance in the same manner as
18 provided by Subchapter B, Chapter 64.

19 (c) An election judge shall seal a ballot if the voter
20 receives assistance from a person who is not an election judge.

21 Sec. 107.013. SECURITY OF BALLOTS AND MATERIALS. (a) On
22 completion of the voting each day on which voting is conducted at a
23 residential care facility under this chapter, the election judges
24 for the facility shall seal the ballot envelopes and any absentee
25 ballot applications inside a secure envelope and shall seal the
26 envelope and sign the seal. The election judges shall place the
27 envelope inside a ballot bag or container.

1 (b) As soon as possible after conducting voting at a
2 residential care facility, but not later than 18 hours after
3 leaving the facility, the election judges shall deliver the ballot
4 bag or container to the early voting clerk.

5 Sec. 107.014. PROVISION OF MAIL BALLOT TO CERTAIN VOTERS.

6 (a) If a qualified voter residing at a residential care facility
7 and seeking to vote at the facility under this chapter is not able
8 to cast a ballot during any time when voting is conducted at the
9 facility, the election judges for the facility shall inform the
10 early voting clerk not later than the fourth day before election
11 day. The clerk shall mail the ballot to the voter not later than the
12 fourth day before election day.

13 (b) Any registered voter who did not cast a ballot at the
14 residential care facility may cast a ballot by:

15 (1) voting in person on election day; or

16 (2) voting by mail.

17 (c) An election judge shall leave a ballot package for a
18 voter who:

19 (1) requested a ballot to be voted by mail and was not
20 present during the scheduled time for early voting at the
21 residential care facility; and

22 (2) is expected to return to the residential care
23 facility before the deadline for returning a ballot by mail.

24 (d) If a voter who requested a ballot to be voted by mail
25 under this chapter is temporarily located at another location,
26 including by hospitalization:

27 (1) the early voting clerk may mail the ballot to the

1 voter's temporary address, if known; or

2 (2) the election judge may personally deliver the
3 ballot package to the voter's temporary address, if known.

4 (e) If an election judge personally delivers a ballot
5 package under Subsection (d), the election judge may:

6 (1) allow the ballot to be returned by mail; or

7 (2) accept the marked ballot personally.

8 Sec. 107.015. WATCHERS. (a) In an election held under
9 this chapter, a watcher may observe the process of ballot
10 distribution in the common areas of a residential care facility in a
11 manner consistent with Chapter 33.

12 (b) A political party entitled to have the names of its
13 nominees placed on the general election ballot may appoint a
14 watcher to accompany the election judges to a residential care
15 facility.

16 (c) A political party seeking to appoint a watcher to serve
17 at a residential care facility shall submit the name of the watcher
18 to the county election officer of the county in which the facility
19 is located, not later than the close of business on the last
20 business day before the date the watcher seeks to observe the
21 conduct of the election under this chapter.

22 (d) A watcher must present the watcher's certificate of
23 appointment to an election judge for the residential care facility
24 on arrival at the facility.

25 (e) A watcher has access to the same areas of the
26 residential care facility as an election judge.

27 Sec. 107.016. LIMITATIONS ON APPLICABILITY OF CHAPTER.

1 (a) The early voting clerk is not required to send election judges
2 to conduct an election at a residential care facility unless there
3 are at least five registered voters who are residents of the
4 facility.

5 (b) This chapter does not prevent a registered voter from:

6 (1) voting early by personal appearance;

7 (2) voting on election day; or

8 (3) voting by mail from an address other than the
9 residential care facility, including from the address of a family
10 member designated under Section 84.002.

11 Sec. 107.017. RULES. The secretary of state shall adopt
12 rules and prescribe procedures for voting at a residential care
13 facility in accordance with this chapter.

14 SECTION 5. Subchapter A, Chapter 242, Health and Safety
15 Code, is amended by adding Section 242.0181 to read as follows:

16 Sec. 242.0181. COMPLIANCE WITH CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS
17 REGARDING EARLY VOTING. An institution must comply with Chapter
18 107, Election Code.

19 SECTION 6. Subchapter A, Chapter 247, Health and Safety
20 Code, is amended by adding Section 247.008 to read as follows:

21 Sec. 247.008. COMPLIANCE WITH CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS
22 REGARDING EARLY VOTING. An assisted living facility must comply
23 with Chapter 107, Election Code.

24 SECTION 7. Sections 242.0181 and 247.008, Health and Safety
25 Code, as added by this Act, apply only to a license issued or
26 renewed on or after the effective date of this Act. A license
27 issued or renewed before that date is governed by the law in effect

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1 on the date the license was issued or renewed, and the former law is
2 continued in effect for that purpose.

3 SECTION 8. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 658 was passed by the House on May 9, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 145, Nays 0, 2 present, not voting; and that the House concurred in Senate amendments to H.B. No. 658 on May 24, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 130, Nays 14, 3 present, not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 658 was passed by the Senate, with amendments, on May 22, 2017, by the following vote: Yeas 30, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: _____

Date

Governor