



H.B. 1406 Improves Election Integrity & Absentee Voting Access In Mississippi

In May 2024, H.B. 1406 was enacted as law. The legislation will make numerous improvements to the voting process and election integrity in Mississippi. Below is a summary of the key provisions of the bill.

Improves access to absentee voting for working Mississippians, people with disabilities, and incarcerated voters

The new law will allow add two new categories of individuals who may vote absentee before Election Day, either by mail or in-person at their local clerk's office:

- Any citizen in prison or in jail in the county where they are registered to vote who has not been convicted of a disenfranchising crime;
- Any citizen who may be on-call for work during Election Day when polls are open, such as police officers, fire fighters, doctors, or nurses.

Additionally, H.B. 1406 will clarify a rule allowing any citizen with a temporary or permanent physical disability to vote absentee.

Strengthens election security by improving the absentee ballot application design and process

The new law makes numerous simple, but important, changes to applications for absentee voting that will improve election security and administration in Mississippi. Among other things, the new law will allow voters to provide contact information on their absentee ballot application, so their local clerk can contact them to verify their identity and address any issues with their absentee ballot.

H.B. 1406 also redesigns the absentee ballot application, so that both the application and certificate where the voter attests to their identity are on the same envelope. This will help both voters and clerks as absentee voters often do not fill out both of these separate requirements.

The absentee ballot application redesign also makes it more clear where the voter should add their signature, which clerks can use to verify the voter's identity. H.B. 1406 also protects ballots from automatically being thrown out if the voter's signature extends beyond the space provided.

Streamlines in-person absentee voting for voters and clerks

H.B. 1406 simplifies the in-person absentee voting process by making use of existing security checks and balances. Instead of the in-person absentee voter's signature being matched between their application and elector certification, local election clerks will continue to verify the voter's identity by reviewing their photo ID and registration status on file.

Changes absentee ballot distribution and return processes

H.B. 1406 permits mail-in absentee ballots to be returned by USPS, FedEx, or other common carriers, but the new law prohibits mail-in absentee ballots from being distributed or returned by hand or drop box. The law also specifically permits registrars to provide absentee ballot applications by hand in their office.

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