HB83

204373-1

By Representative Hall

RFD: State Government

First Read: 02-FEB-21

PFD: 11/30/2020
SYNOPSIS: Under existing law, a registered voter may only vote by absentee ballot if he or she meets one of the criteria prescribed by law for voting absentee.

This bill would allow a registered voter to vote by absentee ballot without an excuse.

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED AN ACT

Relating to voting; to amend Sections 17-11-3 and 17-11-7, Code of Alabama 1975, as last amended by Act 2019-507, 2019 Regular Session; to authorize absentee ballot voting without an excuse.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. Sections 17-11-3 and 17-11-7, Code of Alabama 1975, , as last amended by Act 2019-507, 2019 Regular Session, are amended to read as follows:

"§17-11-3.
"(a) Any qualified elector of this state may apply for and vote an absentee ballot by mail, by hand delivery, or by commercial carrier, as determined by rule by the Secretary of State, as provided in Sections 17-11-5 and 17-11-9, in any primary, general, special, or municipal election, if he or she makes application in writing therefor not less than five days prior to the election in which he or she desires to vote, and meets one or more of the following requirements:

"(1) The person expects to be out of the county or the state, or the municipality for municipal elections, on election day.

"(2) The person has any physical illness or infirmity which prevents his or her attendance at the polls, whether he or she is within or without the county on the day of the election.

"(3) The person expects to work a shift which has at least 10 hours which coincide with the hours the polls are open at his or her regular polling place.

"(4) The person is enrolled as a student at an educational institution located outside the county of his or her personal residence, attendance at which prevents his or her attendance at the polls.

"(5) The person is a member of, or spouse or dependent of a member of, the Armed Forces of the United States or is similarly qualified to vote absentee pursuant to the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 42 U.S.C. 1973ff."
"(6) The person has been appointed as an election officer or named as a poll watcher at a polling place other than his or her regular polling place.

"(7) The person is a caregiver for a family member to the second degree of kinship by affinity or consanguinity and the family member is confined to his or her home.

"(8) The person is incarcerated in prison or jail and has not been convicted of a felony involving moral turpitude, as provided in Section 17-3-30.1.

"(b) An applicant for an absentee ballot who is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States, including the Alabama National Guard, the United States Naval Reserves, the United States Air Force Reserves, and the United States Army Reserve on active duty or active duty for training or an applicant who is the spouse of any member of the armed forces or any other applicant qualified to vote absentee pursuant to the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 42 U.S.C. §1973ff, may make application for an absentee ballot by filling out the federal postcard application form, authorized and provided for under the provisions of The Federal Voting Assistance Act of 1955, Public Law 296, Chapter 656, H.R. 4048, approved August 9, 1955, 84th Congress 1st Session.

"(c) Any registered elector who requires emergency treatment of a licensed physician within five days of an election may apply for an emergency absentee ballot for the election and may vote by returning the absentee ballot no
later than noon on the day the election is held. The attendant
physician shall describe and certify the circumstances as
constituting an emergency on a special form designed by the
Secretary of State and provided by his or her office to local
absentee election managers. The special form shall be attached
to the application.

"(d)(1) Any registered elector whose name appears on
the poll list of qualified voters may vote by an emergency
absentee ballot if any of the following situations arise:

"a. The elector is required by his or her employer
under unforeseen circumstances within five days before an
election to be unavailable to vote at the polls on election
day.

"b. The elector is a caregiver of a person who
requires emergency treatment by a licensed physician within
five days before an election.

"c. A family member to the second degree of kinship
by affinity or consanguinity of an elector dies within five
days before an election.

"(2) Under such circumstances, the elector shall
apply for an emergency absentee ballot at the office of the
absentee election manager no later than the close of the
business day one day prior to the election. The applicant
shall complete and file an application form designed by the
Secretary of State for emergency absentee voters. The form
shall contain an affidavit which the applicant shall sign or
swear acknowledging that he or she was not aware of the
situation constituting the emergency prior to five days before
the election. An applicant who meets the requirements of this
subsection may vote by an emergency absentee ballot. After
voting the ballot, the voter shall hand the ballot to the
absentee election manager.

"(e) If the occurrence of a state of emergency as
declared in this or any other state, or by the federal
government, renders substantial compliance with this article
impossible or unreasonable for a group of qualified voters who
respond to the emergency, the Secretary of State, pursuant to
Section 41-22-5, may adopt an emergency rule to allow those
qualified voters to vote by absentee ballot. Notwithstanding
any other laws to the contrary, all expenses and costs
incurred by the state or any county in carrying out the
responsibilities and duties included in an emergency rule
adopted pursuant to this subsection shall be paid by the State
of Alabama from any funds made available for election expenses
under state and federal law.

"(f) Notwithstanding any other provision of
otherwise applicable law, in the event more than one absentee
ballot is cast in the name of the single voter, whether any
such multiple ballot is cast by mail or otherwise, none of the
affidavit envelopes containing the multiple ballots shall be
opened, and none of the multiple ballots shall be counted,
except in the event of an election contest, upon the order of
the election contest tribunal. Upon the conclusion of an
election contest or, in the event no such contest is filed,
upon the expiration of time for filing such a contest, the
multiple ballots shall be provided to the district attorney,
with photocopies provided to the state Attorney General, for
the investigation, prosecution, or other action as may be
appropriate under applicable law.

"§17-11-7.
"(a) Each absentee ballot shall be accompanied by an
everse upon which shall be printed an affidavit.
"(b) With respect to an absentee ballot cast
pursuant to Section 17-11-3, the affidavit shall read as
follows:

"State of Alabama

"County of ___________

"I, the undersigned, do swear (or affirm) that:

My place of residence in Alabama is: __________

(street)

__________________,

Alabama __________

(city or town) (zip code)

My date of birth is: __________

month day year

"I am entitled to vote an absentee ballot because:
"Check at least one:

"___ I expect to be out of the county or the state on election day.

"___ I am physically incapacitated and will not be able to vote in person on election day.

"___ I expect to work a required workplace shift which has at least 10 hours which coincide with the polling hours at my regular polling place.

"___ I am a student at an educational institution located outside the county of my permanent residence and am therefore unable to vote at my usual polling place on election day.

"___ I am a member of or a spouse or dependent of a member of the Armed Forces of the United States or am otherwise entitled to vote pursuant to the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 42 U.S.C. 1973ff.

"___ I have been appointed as an election officer at a polling place which is not my regular polling place.

"___ I will be out of the county on election day responding to a state of emergency as declared by this state or any other state, or by the federal government.

"___ I am a caregiver for a family member to the second degree of kinship by affinity or consanguinity and the family member is confined to his or her home.

"___ I am currently incarcerated in prison or jail and I have not been convicted of a felony involving moral turpitude.
"I further swear (or affirm) that I have not voted nor will I vote in person in the election to which this ballot pertains.

"I have marked the enclosed absentee ballot voluntarily and I have read or had read to me and understand the instructions accompanying this ballot and I have carefully complied with such instructions.

"Moreover, I further swear (or affirm) that all of the information given above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and that I understand that by knowingly giving false information so as to vote illegally by absentee ballot that I shall be guilty of a misdemeanor which is punishable by a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars ($1,000) or confinement in the county jail for not more than six months, or both.

_________________
(Signature or mark of voter.)

___________________
(Printed name of voter.)

"IF YOUR AFFIDAVIT IS NOT SIGNED (OR MARKED), AND IF YOUR AFFIDAVIT IS NOT WITNESSED BY TWO WITNESSES 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER OR A NOTARY PUBLIC OR OTHER OFFICER AUTHORIZED TO ACKNOWLEDGE OATHS, PRIOR TO BEING DELIVERED OR MAILED TO THE ABSENTEE ELECTION MANAGER, YOUR BALLOT WILL NOT BE COUNTED.
"Sworn to and subscribed before me this _____ day of _____, 2__.

"I certify that the affiant is known (or made known) to me to be the identical party he or she claims to be.

_______________ (Signature of official)

(Title of official)

_______________

(Address of official)

OR

1st Witness___________

Signature

_______________

Print name

_______________

Address

_______________

City Zip Code

2nd Witness___________

Signature

_______________
"(c) Unless running unopposed, a candidate may not witness or notarize any absentee ballot."

Section 2. This act shall become effective on the first day of the third month following its passage and approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.