

SENATE BILL NO. 357

INTRODUCED BY B. HAMLETT

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A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROHIBITING A RESIGNING MEMBER OF A BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FROM PARTICIPATING IN FILLING THE VACANCY TO BE CREATED BY THE RESIGNATION; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 2-16-501 AND 7-4-2106, MCA."

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

Section 1. Section 2-16-501, MCA, is amended to read:

"2-16-501. Vacancies created. An office becomes vacant on the happening of any one of the following events before the expiration of the term of the incumbent:

- (1) the death of the incumbent;
- (2) a determination pursuant to Title 53, chapter 21, part 1, that the incumbent suffers from a mental disorder and is in need of commitment;
- (3) resignation of the incumbent becoming effective;
- (4) removal of the incumbent from office;
- (5) the incumbent's ceasing to be a resident of the state or, if the office is local, of the district, city, county, town, or township for which the incumbent was chosen or appointed or within which the duties of the incumbent's office are required to be discharged;
- (6) except as provided in 10-1-1008, absence of the incumbent from the state, without the permission of the legislature, beyond the period allowed by law;
- (7) the incumbent's ceasing to discharge the duty of the incumbent's office for the period of 3 consecutive months, except when prevented by sickness, when absent from the state by permission of the legislature, or as provided in 10-1-1008;
- (8) conviction of the incumbent of a felony or of an offense involving moral turpitude or a violation of the incumbent's official duties;
- (9) the incumbent's refusal or neglect to file the incumbent's official oath or bond within the time prescribed;
- (10) the decision of a competent tribunal declaring void the incumbent's election or appointment."

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2 **Section 2.** Section 7-4-2106, MCA, is amended to read:

3 **"7-4-2106. Vacancy on board of county commissioners -- resigning member not to participate in**
4 **filling pending vacancy.** (1) For the purposes of this part, "vacancy" has the same meaning as prescribed in
5 2-16-501.

6 (2) Whenever a vacancy occurs in the board of county commissioners from a failure to elect or
7 otherwise, the remaining county commissioners shall fill the vacancy and the appointee shall hold office until the
8 next general election unless otherwise provided in subsection (3) or (4). The procedure to be used to fill the
9 vacancy is as follows:

10 (a) If the former incumbent represented a party eligible for a primary election under 13-10-601, the
11 county central committee of that party shall submit to the remaining commissioners three names of people who
12 have lived in the unrepresented district for at least 2 years preceding the day the vacancy occurs. The remaining
13 commissioners shall appoint one of these three to fill the vacancy. Whenever the remaining commissioners are
14 unable to elect an appointee from the submitted list, they shall request a second list of three names from the
15 county central committee. The second list may not contain any of the names submitted on the first list. The
16 remaining commissioners shall then select an appointee from the individuals named on both lists.

17 (b) If the former incumbent was independent or was originally nominated by a party that does not meet
18 the requirements of 13-10-601 or if the vacancy occurs from a failure to elect, the remaining commissioners shall
19 invite applications for the vacancy in a notice published as provided in 13-1-108 and shall accept an application
20 from any person who has lived in the unrepresented district for at least 2 years preceding the day the vacancy
21 occurs. The remaining commissioners shall appoint one of these applicants to fill the vacancy.

22 (3) Whenever a vacancy occurs 75 days or more before the general election held during the second or
23 fourth year of the term, an individual must be elected to complete the term at that general election. The election
24 procedure to be used to elect the successor is as follows:

25 (a) Whenever the vacancy occurs 75 days or more before the primary election during the second or
26 fourth year of the term, the same procedure must be used as is used to elect county commissioners to full 6-year
27 terms.

28 (b) Whenever the vacancy occurs after the 75th day preceding the primary election, any political party
29 desiring to enter a candidate in the general election shall select a candidate as provided in 13-38-204. A political
30 party shall notify the clerk and recorder of the party nominee. A person desiring to be a candidate as an

1 independent shall follow the procedures provided in 13-10-501 and 13-10-502. The petition for an independent
2 candidate must be filed with the clerk and recorder on or before the 75th day prior to the general election. A
3 candidate for a nonpartisan office shall file as provided in Title 13, chapter 14.

4 (4) Whenever a vacancy occurs after the 75th day preceding the general election held during the fourth
5 year of the term, the person appointed by the remaining county commissioners under subsection (2) shall serve
6 until the end of the term.

7 (5) (a) If multiple vacancies occur simultaneously so that a quorum cannot be established, the county
8 compensation board provided for in 7-4-2503 shall, subject to subsection (5)(c) of this section, appoint enough
9 commissioners to allow for a quorum to be established. The vacancies must be filled in the order in which the
10 commissioners' terms would have expired.

11 (b) If vacancies occur at different times but, because appointments have not yet been made, a quorum
12 cannot be established, the county compensation board shall, subject to subsection (5)(c), appoint enough
13 commissioners to allow for a quorum to be established. The county compensation board shall appoint each
14 commissioner in the order that the vacancy occurred.

15 (c) (i) A commissioner appointed under this subsection (5) must meet the residency requirement in
16 7-4-2104(2) and must be from the same district as the commissioner being replaced.

17 (ii) If a commissioner being replaced represented a party eligible for a primary election under 13-10-601,
18 the county central committee of that party shall, within 30 days of the occurrence of the vacancy, submit to the
19 county compensation board three names of people who have lived in the unrepresented district for at least 2
20 years prior to the occurrence of the vacancy. The county compensation board shall appoint each commissioner
21 from the list of names provided by the county central committee.

22 (d) Once a quorum can be established, the county commissioners forming the quorum shall appoint the
23 remaining commissioners as provided in this section.

24 (e) If a county compensation board does not exist, appointments under this subsection (5) must be made
25 by a district judge having jurisdiction in the county.

26 (6) If a member of the board of county commissioners has submitted the member's resignation as
27 provided in 2-16-502 or if proceedings have begun to remove the member from office under 2-16-501, that
28 member may not be considered to be a remaining member of the commission as provided in this section and may
29 not participate in filling the vacancy to be created when the resignation becomes effective."

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