

SENATE BILL NO. 124

INTRODUCED BY D. BROWN

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT PROVIDING THAT UNIFORMED AND OVERSEAS VOTERS MAY USE A SECURE ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE IF A SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED DURING PROCESS OF REGISTERING AND VOTING; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 13-21-102, 13-21-104, AND 13-21-106, MCA."

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

Section 1. Section 13-21-102, MCA, is amended to read:

"13-21-102. Definitions. As used in this chapter, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Covered voter" means:

(a) a uniformed-service voter or an overseas voter who is registered to vote in Montana;

(b) a uniformed-service voter whose voting residence is in Montana and who otherwise satisfies Montana's voter eligibility requirements;

(c) an overseas voter who, before leaving the United States, was last eligible to vote in Montana and, except for a state residency requirement, otherwise satisfies Montana's voter eligibility requirements;

(d) an overseas voter who, before leaving the United States, would have been last eligible to vote in Montana had the voter then been of voting age and, except for a state residency requirement, otherwise satisfies Montana's voter eligibility requirements.

(2) "Dependent" means an individual recognized as a dependent by a uniformed service.

(3) "Electronic signature" has the meaning provided in 30-18-102. The term includes a digital security protocol that may be used to verify that the signature is that of a specific person and that detects changes, errors, or tampering with respect to the signature or document signed.

~~(3)~~(4) "Federal postcard application" means the application prescribed under section 101(b)(2) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 42 U.S.C. 1973ff(b)(2).

~~(4)~~(5) "Federal write-in absentee ballot" means the ballot described in section 103 of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 42 U.S.C. 1973ff-2.

~~(5)~~(6) "Military-overseas ballot" means:

(a) a federal write-in absentee ballot;

1 (b) an absentee ballot specifically prepared or distributed for use by a covered voter in accordance with
2 this chapter; or

3 (c) a ballot cast by a covered voter in accordance with this chapter.

4 ~~(6)~~(7) "Overseas voter" means a United States citizen who resides outside the United States who would
5 otherwise be qualified to vote in the last place in which the person was domiciled before leaving the United
6 States.

7 ~~(7)~~(8) "State" means a state of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States
8 Virgin Islands, or any territory or insular possession subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.

9 ~~(8)~~(9) "Uniformed service" means:

10 (a) active and reserve components of the army, navy, air force, marine corps, or coast guard of the
11 United States;

12 (b) the merchant marine, the commissioned corps of the public health service, or the commissioned
13 corps of the national oceanic and atmospheric administration of the United States; or

14 (c) the national guard and state militia.

15 ~~(9)~~(10) "Uniformed-service voter" means an individual who is qualified to vote and is:

16 (a) a member of the active or reserve components of the army, navy, air force, marine corps, or coast
17 guard of the United States who is on active duty;

18 (b) a member of the merchant marine, the commissioned corps of the public health service, or the
19 commissioned corps of the national oceanic and atmospheric administration of the United States;

20 (c) a member of the national guard or state militia in activated status; or

21 (d) a spouse or dependent of a member referred to in this subsection ~~(9)~~ (10).

22 ~~(10)~~(11) "United States", used in the territorial sense, means the several states, the District of Columbia,
23 Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, and any territory or insular possession subject to the jurisdiction
24 of the United States.

25 ~~(11)~~(12) "Voter registration application" means the form approved by the secretary of state that an elector
26 may use to register to vote in Montana."

27

28 **Section 2.** Section 13-21-104, MCA, is amended to read:

29 **"13-21-104. Adoption of rules on electronic registration and voting -- acceptance of funds.** (1) The
30 secretary of state shall adopt reasonable rules under the rulemaking provisions of the Montana Administrative

1 Procedure Act to implement this chapter. The rules are binding upon election administrators.

2 (2) The rules must provide that:

3 (a) there are uniform statewide standards concerning electronic registration and voting;

4 (b) regular absentee ballots for a primary, general, or special election are available in a format that allows
5 the ballot to be electronically transmitted to a covered voter as soon as the ballots are available pursuant to
6 13-13-205;

7 (c) a covered voter may, subject to 13-2-304, register and vote up to the time that the polls close on
8 election day;

9 (d) a covered voter is allowed to cast a provisional ballot if there is a question about the elector's
10 registration information or eligibility to vote; ~~and~~

11 (e) a covered voter is allowed the option of using an electronic signature if a signature is required or
12 requested when registering, requesting an absentee ballot, or voting, including when filling out and returning a
13 federal postcard application or federal write-in absentee ballot, without having to print or scan a document before
14 returning materials electronically; and

15 ~~(e)(f)~~ a ballot cast by a covered voter and transmitted electronically will remain secret, as required by
16 Article IV, section 1, of the Montana constitution. This subsection ~~(2)(e)~~ (2)(f) does not prohibit the adoption of
17 rules establishing administrative procedures on how electronically transmitted votes must be transcribed to an
18 official ballot. However, the rules must be designed to protect the accuracy, integrity, and secrecy of the process.

19 (3) The secretary of state may apply for and receive a grant of funds from any agency or office of the
20 United States government or from any other public or private source and may use the money for the purpose of
21 implementing this chapter."
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23 **Section 3.** Section 13-21-106, MCA, is amended to read:

24 **"13-21-106. Role of secretary of state.** (1) The secretary of state is the state official responsible for
25 implementing the provisions of this chapter and the state's responsibilities under the Uniformed and Overseas
26 Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 42 U.S.C. 1973ff, et seq.

27 (2) The secretary of state shall make available to covered voters information regarding voter registration
28 procedures for covered voters and procedures for casting military-overseas ballots. The secretary of state may
29 delegate the responsibility under this subsection only to the state office designated in compliance with section
30 102(b)(1) of the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 42 U.S.C. 1973ff-1(b)(1).

