A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ELECTIONS.

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

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that voter turnout remains low in Hawaii and continues to decline. Only 52.6 per cent of registered Hawaii voters cast ballots in the 2018 general election. In 2016, Hawaii had the lowest voter turnout in the United States. This represents a sharp decline in voter turnout over the years, as approximately ninety-three per cent of registered voters cast ballots in Hawaii's first gubernatorial election in 1959.

The legislature further finds that conducting an all-mail voting system would likely increase voter turnout in Hawaii. Oregon, Washington, and Colorado have had an increase in voter turnout after converting to an all-mail voting system. Oregon traditionally has one of the highest voter turnouts in the country, and many attribute the high voter turnout to Oregon's all-mail policy. In the 2016 election, 80.33 per cent of registered voters in Oregon cast ballots. When Oregon converted to an all-mail vote during the 2000 election, 79.80 per cent of
registered voters cast votes. Whereas in 1998, the election prior to enactment of Oregon's all-mail policy, only 59.02 per cent of registered voters in Oregon cast ballots.

The legislature further finds that an increasing number of Hawaii voters are submitting their votes by mail. The 2014 Hawaii primary election was the first election in which more ballots were submitted before primary election day than on that day. Fifty-six per cent of Hawaii voters chose to vote early during the 2014 primary, and approximately eighty-three per cent of those voters did so through a mail-in absentee ballot. In 2016, the number of votes cast before election day exceeded the number of votes cast at polling places on election day, in all counties except one. The county of Kauai will conduct all-mail voting for the 2020 election.

The legislature further finds that Hawaii's conversion to an all-mail voting system would significantly reduce the logistical issues related to conducting elections at polling places.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

(1) Require all elections statewide to be conducted by mail beginning with the 2022 primary election, but
allow any election to be conducted by mail prior to
the 2022 primary election, in whole or in part, as
determined by the chief election officer or county
clerk, as appropriate;

(2) Establish voter service centers that will remain open
from the tenth business day preceding an election
through the close of the polls at 7:00 p.m. on the day
of the election to receive personal delivery of mail-
in ballots, accommodate voters with special needs,
offer same day registration and voting, and provide
other election services;

(3) Establish a minimum of one voter service center on
each island, and no less than two voter service
centers on each island with over one hundred thousand
people; and

(4) Allow for additional places of deposit for personal
delivery of mail-in ballots.

SECTION 2. Chapter 11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended
by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and to read
as follows:

"PART . ELECTIONS BY MAIL
§11-A Elections to be conducted by mail. Beginning in 2022, all federal, state, and county primary, special primary, general, special general, and special elections shall be conducted by mail in accordance with this part; provided that any registered voter may request an absentee ballot or permanent absentee ballot in accordance with section 15-4 in lieu of receiving an election by mail ballot package pursuant to this part; provided further that absentee ballot-only elections may continue to be conducted pursuant to section 15-4(b).

§11-B Procedures for conducting elections by mail. (a)

Election by mail ballot packages shall include:

(1) An official ballot;

(2) A prepaid postage return identification envelope;

(3) A secrecy envelope; and

(4) Instructions.

(b) The county clerk shall mail a ballot package by nonforwardable mail to each registered voter in the county between twenty-one and twenty-five days before the date of an election.
(c) Voters shall receive their ballots at least fourteen days prior to the date when ballots must be received by the county clerk to be counted.

(d) The chief election officer shall determine and provide for places of deposit and voter service centers pursuant to section 11-92.1.

(e) Voter service centers shall remain open from the tenth business day preceding an election through the close of the polls on the day of the election to receive personal delivery of mail-in ballots, accommodate voters with special needs, offer same day registration and voting, and provide other election services.

(f) A minimum of one voter service center shall be available on each island, and no less than two voter service centers shall be available on each island with a population of over one hundred thousand.

§11-C Public notice of mailing. Public notice of the date or dates that election by mail ballot packages are mailed shall be given by the chief election officer and all county election offices in the manner prescribed in section 11-2.8 when all ballot packages have been mailed to voters.
§11-D  Ballot instructions; ballot return.  (a)  Upon receipt of the election by mail ballot package, to cast a valid vote, a voter shall comply with the instructions included in the ballot package. The instructions shall include directions on marking the ballot, inserting the marked ballot in the secrecy envelope, inserting the secrecy envelope with the marked ballot into the prepaid postage return identification envelope, and signing the return identification envelope before mailing or delivering the return identification envelope containing the secrecy envelope with the marked ballot.

(b)  The instructions shall include information on election fraud and voter fraud, as provided in sections 19-3(5) and 19-3.5, and notice that violation of either section may subject the voter, upon conviction, to imprisonment, a fine, or both.

(c)  To cast a valid vote, a voter shall return the prepaid postage return identification envelope containing the secrecy envelope with the marked ballot:

(1)  By mail so that the return identification envelope is received at the office of the clerk no later than the close of the polls as provided in section 11-131 on the date of the election;
(2) By personal delivery to any place of deposit no later than 6:00 p.m. on the day preceding the date of the election; or

(3) By personal delivery to any voter service center no later than the close of the polls on the date of the election.

(d) If an election by mail ballot package mailed pursuant to section 11-B is not received by the voter within fourteen days of an election, or a voter otherwise requires a replacement ballot within five days of an election, the voter may request that a ballot be forwarded by electronic transmission. Upon receipt of the request and confirmation that proper application was made, the clerk may transmit the appropriate ballot, together with a form containing the affirmations and information required by section 15-6, and a form containing a waiver of the right to secrecy under section 11-137. The voter may return the voted ballot and executed forms by:

(1) Electronic transmission if the ballot and forms are received by the issuing clerk before voting has concluded; or
Mail or by personal delivery to a place of deposit or voter service center by the respective deadline set forth in section 11-E(c).

Upon receipt, the clerk shall verify compliance with the requirements of this part; provided that if the voter returns multiple voted ballots for the same election, the clerk shall prepare, for counting, only the first ballot returned that is not spoiled. Prior to an election, the clerk shall determine the permissible form or forms of electronic transmission that may be used for the initial transmission of ballots to voters and the return transmission of ballots by voters. The forms of electronic transmission permitted for the initial transmission of ballots may differ from those permitted for the return of ballots by voters.

For purposes of this subsection, "electronic transmission" may include facsimile transmission, electronic mail delivery, or the utilization of an online ballot delivery and return system.

§11-E Replacement ballots. (a) A voter may obtain a replacement ballot if the ballot is destroyed, spoiled, or lost. Replacement ballots shall be provided to a voter who completes and signs a replacement ballot request form. The replacement
ballot request form shall include information that allows the clerk to verify the registration of the voter and ensure that another ballot has not been returned by the voter.

(b) Upon receipt of the completed and signed replacement ballot request form, the clerk shall:

(1) Verify the registration of the voter and ensure that another ballot has not been returned by the voter;

(2) Note on the list of registered voters that the voter has requested a replacement ballot;

(3) Mark the prepaid postage return identification envelope as a replacement ballot; and

(4) Issue the replacement election by mail ballot package by mail or make the ballot package available for pick-up by the voter.

(c) Voters requesting a replacement ballot shall return the prepaid postage return identification envelope containing the secrecy envelope with the marked replacement ballot by mail or personal delivery to a place of deposit no later than 6:00 p.m. on the day preceding the date of the election or by personal delivery to a voter service center no later than the close of the polls on the date of the election.
§11-F  Counting of mail-in ballots.  (a)  Counting may begin no sooner than the seventh day before the election.  In the presence of official observers, counting center employees may count the ballots on the day of the election; provided that no results shall be disclosed to the public until the close of the voter service centers.  All handling and counting of the mail-in ballots shall be in accordance with procedures established by the chief election officer.

(b)  A mail-in ballot shall be counted only if:

(1)  It is returned in the prepaid postage return identification envelope;

(2)  The return identification envelope is signed by the voter to whom the ballot is mailed or delivered;

(3)  The signature on the return identification envelope is verified by the clerk with the signature of the voter shown on the registry of voters; and

(4)  The return identification envelope is received in a timely manner by any of the methods prescribed under section 11-D.

(c)  Upon receipt of a marked replacement ballot, the county clerk shall verify that a completed and signed
replacement ballot request form has been received by the county clerk or is included with the marked replacement ballot. The county clerk shall not process the marked replacement ballot unless the replacement ballot request form has been completed and signed by the voter and received by the county clerk.

§11-G State and county election expenses and responsibilities in elections by mail. (a) Expenses for elections by mail shall be shared and set forth as follows:

(1) Expenses related to elections by mail involving both state and county offices, or federal and county offices, and unrelated to voter registration and voter service centers shall be divided in half between the State and the counties. Each county shall pay a portion of expenses based on the proportion of the total number of registered voters in the State who are registered in the county at the time of the general election. The counties shall separately be responsible for expenses associated with voter registration and voter service centers;

(2) All expenses for county elections by mail that do not involve state or federal offices shall be borne by the
county and paid out of appropriations as may be made
by the county council; and

(3) All expenses for state or federal elections by mail
that do not involve county offices shall be borne by
the State and paid out of appropriations as may be
made by the legislature. Expenses attributable to
registration of voters by the county clerk for those
state or federal elections that do not involve county
offices shall be borne by the State and paid out of
appropriations as may be made by the legislature.

(b) Election responsibilities in elections by mail shall
be shared and set forth as follows:

(1) In elections by mail involving both state and county
offices, or federal and county offices, the counties
shall be responsible for voter registration and voter
service centers and the State shall be responsible for
the mailing, receipt, processing, and tabulation of
ballots. Any responsibilities not enumerated in this
paragraph shall be assigned to the counties or the
State by the chief election officer;
(2) The county shall be responsible for elections by mail involving only county offices; and

(3) For elections by mail involving only state or federal offices, the counties shall be responsible for voter registration and voter service centers and the State shall be responsible for the mailing, receipt, processing, and tabulation of ballots. Any responsibilities not enumerated in this paragraph shall be assigned to the counties or the State by the chief election officer.

§11-H Electronic accessibility of voter registration applications and signatures associated with the examiner of drivers. (a) The examiner of drivers of each county shall ensure that the contents of the affidavit on application for voter registration provided by applicants in conjunction with a driver's license or civil identification card application are electronically stored in the examiner's databases.

(b) The examiner of drivers of each county shall provide the respective county clerk with the voter registration information set forth in the affidavit on application for voter registration.
registration electronically, including a digital copy of the applicant's signature.

(c) The county clerk shall treat the electronic information provided pursuant to subsection (b) as an application to register under section 11-15.

(d) Databases maintained by the counties and the department of transportation containing driver license and civil identification card information shall be electronically accessible by the statewide voter registration system in order to:

(1) Permit the timely processing of voter registration applications made in conjunction with applications for driver's license and civil identification cards;

(2) Facilitate verification of information provided by online voter registration applicants under section 11-15.3; and

(3) Ensure the integrity of the voter registration rolls and the voting process."

SECTION 3. Section 11-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended as follows:
1. By adding two new definitions to be appropriately inserted and to read:

"Place of deposit" means a site designated by the chief election officer for the purpose of receiving prepaid postage return identification envelopes in an election conducted by mail pursuant to part____.

"Voter service center" means a site designated by the chief election officer to serve all of the following purposes:

(1) Receive prepaid postage return identification envelopes for absentee and permanent absentee ballots pursuant to chapter 15;

(2) Receive prepaid postage return identification envelopes in an election by mail pursuant to part____;

(3) Provide voting machine services for persons with disabilities pursuant to the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-252), as amended, and any other federal or state law relating to persons with disabilities;

(4) Assist with voter registration services as provided by law; and

(5) Any other purposes that the chief election officer may deem necessary in the event of a natural disaster or____.
other exigent circumstances occurring prior to an election."

2. By amending the definitions of "ballot" and "voting system" to read:

"Ballot" means a ballot including an absentee ballot that is a written or printed, or partly written and partly printed paper or papers containing the names of persons to be voted for, the office to be filled, and the questions or issues to be voted on. "Ballot" includes a ballot used in an election by mail pursuant to part . A ballot may consist of one or more cards or pieces of paper, or one face of a card or piece of paper, or a portion of the face of a card or piece of paper, depending on the number of offices, candidates to be elected there to, questions or issues to be voted on, and the voting system in use. It shall also include the face of the mechanical voting machine when arranged with cardboard or other material within the ballot frames, containing the names of the candidates and questions to be voted on.

"Voting system" means the use of paper ballots, electronic ballot cards, voting machines, elections by mail
pursuant to part, absentee voting pursuant to chapter 15, or any system by which votes are cast and counted."

SECTION 4. Section 11-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§11-4 Rules [and regulations]. The chief election officer may [make] adopt, amend, and repeal [such] rules [and regulations] governing elections held under this title, election procedures, and the selection, establishment, use, and operation of all voting systems now in use or to be adopted in the State, and all other similar matters relating thereto as in the chief election officer's judgment shall be necessary to carry out this title.

In [making] adopting, amending, and repealing rules [and regulations] for voters who cannot vote [at the polls] in person or receive or return ballots by mail, and all other voters, the chief election officer shall provide for voting by [such] these persons in [such] a manner as to [insure] ensure secrecy of the ballot and to preclude tampering with the ballots of these voters and other election frauds. [Such] The rules [and regulations], when adopted in conformity with chapter 91 and
upon approval by the governor, shall have the force and effect of law."

SECTION 5. Section 11-92.1, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§11-92.1 Election proclamation; [establishment of a new precinct] places of deposit; voter service centers. (a) [The] chief election officer shall issue a proclamation whenever a new precinct is established in any representative district. The chief election officer shall provide a suitable polling place for each precinct. Schools, recreational halls, park facilities, and other publicly owned or controlled buildings, whenever possible and convenient, shall be used as polling places. The chief election officer shall make arrangements for the rental or erection of suitable shelter for this purpose whenever public buildings are not available and shall cause these polling places to be equipped with the necessary facilities for lighting, ventilation, and equipment needed for elections on any island. This proclamation may be issued jointly with [the] any other proclamation required [in section 11-91.] by this title."
(b) For elections by mail under part a, the county clerk shall issue a proclamation listing all places of deposit and voter service centers that are established by the county clerk. No less than two walk-in voter service centers shall be made available on each island with over one hundred thousand people, and no less than one walk-in voter service center shall be made available on each other island. All walk-in voter service centers shall remain open from ten days prior to the election until the closing of the polls on election day. The county clerk may make adjustments to places of deposit and voter service centers, as circumstances may require; provided that the county clerk may also give notice of adjustments through available news or broadcast media. This proclamation may be issued jointly with any other proclamation required by this title.

(c) No change shall be made in the boundaries of any precinct later than 4:30 p.m. on the tenth day prior to the close of filing for an election.

(d) Notwithstanding subsection (a), and pursuant to section 15-2.5, the chief election officer is not required to
establish polling places for precincts affected by natural disasters, as provided in section 15-2.5."

SECTION 6. Section 11-92.3, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§11-92.3 Consolidated precincts; natural disasters; postponement; absentee voting required; special elections. (a) [In the event of] If a flood, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, high wind, or other natural disaster[, occurring] occurs prior to an election, that makes a precinct inaccessible, the chief election officer or county clerk in the case of county elections may consolidate precincts within a representative district. If the extent of damage caused by any natural disaster is such that the ability of voters, in any precinct, district, or county, to exercise their right to vote is substantially impaired, the chief election officer or county clerk in the case of county elections may require the registered voters of the affected precinct to vote by absentee ballot pursuant to section 15-2.5 and may postpone the conducting of an election in the affected precinct for no more than twenty-one days; provided that any [œeh] postponement shall not affect the conduct of the election, tabulation, or distribution of results.
for those precincts, districts, or counties not designated for postponement. The chief election officer or county clerk in the case of county elections shall give notice of the consolidation, postponement, or requirement to vote by absentee ballot, in the affected county or precinct prior to the opening of the precinct polling place by whatever possible news or broadcast media are available. Precinct officials and workers affected by any consolidation shall not forfeit their pay.

(b) If a natural disaster occurs in a county conducting an election by mail under part , the county clerk shall have the same duties and responsibilities set forth in subsection (a) that the chief election officer would otherwise have to consolidate voter service centers and places of deposit, establish alternate locations, or to otherwise postpone the election and establish alternative means of voting.

[(b) In the event] (c) If the chief election officer or the county clerk in a county election determines that the number of candidates or issues on the ballot in a special, special primary, or special general election does not require the full number of established precincts, the precincts may be consolidated for the purposes of the special, special primary,
or special general election into a small number of special, special primary, or special general election precincts.

A special, special primary, or special general election precinct shall be considered the same as an established precinct for all purposes, including precinct official requirements provided in section 11-71. Not later than 4:30 p.m. on the tenth day prior to the special, special primary, or special general election, the chief election officer or the county clerk shall give public notice, in the area in which the special, special primary, or special general election is to be held, of the special, special primary, or special general election precincts and their polling places. Notices of the consolidation also shall be posted on election day at the established precinct polling places, giving the location of the special, special primary, or special general election precinct polling place."

SECTION 7. Section 11-131, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§11-131 Hours of voting. The polls shall be opened by the precinct officials at 7:00 a.m. of the election day and shall be kept open continuously until [6:00] 7:00 p.m. of that
day. If, at the closing hour of voting, any voter desiring to vote is standing in line outside the entrance of the polls with the desire of entering and voting, but due to the polling place being overcrowded has been unable to do so, the voter shall be allowed to vote irrespective of the closing hour of voting. No voter shall be permitted to enter or join the line after the prescribed hour for closing the polls. If all of the registered voters of the precinct have cast their votes prior to the closing time, the polls may be closed earlier but the votes shall not be counted until after closing time unless allowed by the chief election officer."

SECTION 8. Section 15D-3, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"[§15D-3] Elections covered. The voting procedures in this chapter apply to:

(1) A general, special, or primary election for federal office;

(2) A general, special, or primary election for statewide or state legislative office or state ballot measure; and
(3) A general, special, recall, primary, or runoff election for local government office or local ballot measure conducted under [section 11-91.5] part of chapter 11 for which absentee voting or voting by mail is available for other voters."

SECTION 9. Section 19-6, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§19-6 Misdemeanors. The following persons shall be guilty of a misdemeanor:

(1) Any person who offers any bribe or makes any promise of gain, or with knowledge of the same permits any person to offer any bribe or make any promise of gain for the person's benefit to any voter to induce the voter to sign a nomination paper, and any person who accepts any bribe or promise of gain of any kind as consideration for signing the same, whether the bribe or promise of gain be offered or accepted before or after the signing;

(2) Any person who willfully tears down or destroys or defaces any election proclamation or any poster or
notice or list of voters or visual aids or facsimile ballot, issued or posted by authority of law;

(3) Any person printing or duplicating or causing to be printed or duplicated any ballot, conforming as to the size, weight, shape, thickness, or color to the official ballot so that it could be cast or counted as an official ballot in an election;

(4) Every person who is disorderly or creates a disturbance whereby any meeting of the precinct officials or the board of registration of voters during an election is disturbed or interfered with; or whereby any person who intends to be lawfully present at any meeting or election is prevented from attending; or who causes any disturbance at any election; and every person assisting or aiding or abetting any disturbance;

(5) Every person who, either in person or through another, in any manner breaks up or prevents, or endeavors to break up or prevent, the holding of any meeting of the board of registration of voters, or in any manner
breaks up or prevents, or endeavors to break up or prevent, the holding of any election;

(6) Any person, other than those designated by section 11-132, who remains or loiters within the area set aside for voting as set forth in section 11-132 during the time appointed for voting;

(7) Any person, including candidates carrying on any campaign activities within the area described in section 11-132 during the period of time starting one hour before the polling place opens and ending when the polling place closes for the purpose of influencing votes. Campaign activities shall include the following:

(A) Any distribution, circulation, carrying, holding, posting, or staking of campaign cards, pamphlets, posters and other literature;

(B) The use of public address systems and other public communication media;

(C) The use of motor caravans or parades; and

(D) The use of entertainment troupes or the free distribution of goods and services;
(8) Any person who opens a return envelope containing [an absentee]:

(A) An absentee ballot voted under chapter 15 other than those persons authorized to do so under chapter 15; or

(B) A ballot voted by mail under part of chapter 11 other than those persons authorized to do so under part of chapter 11;

(9) Any unauthorized person found in possession of any voting machine or keys thereof; and

(10) Every person who willfully violates or fails to obey any of the provisions of law, punishment for which is not otherwise in this chapter specially provided for."

SECTION 10. In codifying the new sections added by section 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating the new sections in this Act.

SECTION 11. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.
SECTION 12. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.

INTRODUCED BY:

[Signatures]

JAN 24 2019
Report Title:
Voting; Elections by Mail

Description:
Requires conduct of all elections by mail beginning in 2022. Provides for places of deposit for personal delivery of ballots and voter service centers on each island.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.