



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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EXPAND ABSENTEE VOTING

House Bill 4603

Sponsor: Rep. Joseph Rivet

Committee: Constitutional Law and Ethics

Complete to 10-26-00

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4603 AS INTRODUCED 4-29-99

The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to allow any voter to vote by absentee ballot.

Currently, in order to vote by absentee ballot, an elector must meet one or more of several conditions specified in law under the definition of "absent voter." The law currently allows "absent voters" to vote by absentee ballot, and defines "absent voter" as any qualified and registered elector who meets one or more of six listed circumstances: (1) is 60 years old or older; (2) is or will be absent during the time the polls are open on election day; (3) cannot, without assistance, attend the polls on election day; (4) cannot attend the polls on election day because of his or her religious tenets; (5) cannot attend the polls because he or she is in jail awaiting arraignment or trial; or (6) cannot attend the polls due to working as an election precinct inspector in a precinct other than that in which he or she normally votes.

The bill would amend the law to allow any qualified and registered elector who wished to vote without attending the polls on the day of an election to obtain an absentee ballot. It would do this by eliminating the current list of conditions under the definition of "absent voter," and instead define "absent voter" to mean "a qualified and registered elector who wish[ed] to vote without attending the polls on the day of an election."

Emergency absentee ballot. The election law also currently requires that people apply for an absentee ballot no sooner than 75 days before an election but no later than 2 p.m. of the Saturday immediately preceding the election. However, if a qualified elector is unable to apply for an absentee ballot because he or she becomes physically disabled or will be absent from the city or township due to sickness or death in the family, the law allows him or her to apply for an absent voter ballot at any time before 4 p.m. on election day. The bill would amend this late application requirement to strike the current death and disability requirements and instead allow a late application for an absentee ballot if "an event" occurred at a time that made it impossible to apply for the ballot by the statutory deadline.

Finally, the bill would require the secretary of state to prescribe a standard emergency absent voter ballot application form, including the size of the form and the color of the paper on which it were printed.

MCL 168.758, 168.759, and 168.759b

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#This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.