Act No. 82
Public Acts of 2023
Approved by the Governor
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STATE OF MICHIGAN 102ND LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION OF 2023

Introduced by Senators Santana, Moss, Singh, Brinks, Wojno, Cavanagh, Hertel, Chang, Geiss, Polehanki, Irwin, McCann, Camilleri, Shink, Cherry, McDonald Rivet and McMorrow

ENROLLED SENATE BILL No. 370

AN ACT to amend 1954 PA 116, entitled "An act to reorganize, consolidate, and add to the election laws; to provide for election officials and prescribe their powers and duties; to prescribe the powers and duties of certain state departments, state agencies, and state and local officials and employees; to provide for the nomination and election of candidates for public office; to provide for the resignation, removal, and recall of certain public officers; to provide for the filling of vacancies in public office; to provide for and regulate primaries and elections; to provide for the purity of elections; to guard against the abuse of the elective franchise; to define violations of this act; to provide appropriations; to prescribe penalties and provide remedies; and to repeal certain acts and all other acts inconsistent with this act," by amending sections 759, 761, and 766 (MCL 168.759, 168.761, and 168.766), sections 759 and 761 as amended by 2020 PA 302 and section 766 as amended by 2018 PA 120, and by adding sections 766a and 766b; and to repeal acts and parts of acts.

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

Sec. 759. (1) A registered elector may apply for an absent voter ballot in any of the following ways:

- (a) By a written request signed by the elector.
- (b) On an absent voter ballot application form as provided for in this section.
- (c) On a federal postcard application.
- (d) Using an online absent voter ballot application as provided by the secretary of state.
- (2) A registered elector may submit an absent voter ballot application in any of the following ways:
- (a) By mail or email to the clerk of the city or township in which the elector resides.
- (b) By using the online absent voter ballot application as provided by the secretary of state.
- (c) Until 4 p.m. on the day before election day, in person to the clerk of the city or township in which the elector resides.
- (d) On election day, in person until 8 p.m. to the clerk of the city or township in which the elector resides, but only if the elector is registering to vote or updating the elector's voter registration address. An elector who submits an absent voter ballot application under this subdivision must complete the elector's absent voter ballot in the city or township clerk's office.
- (3) An elector must sign the absent voter ballot application. The digital image of an elector's signature from a Michigan driver license or official Michigan personal identification card record, or an electronic image of an elector's physical signature, is an acceptable signature for the absent voter ballot application. An absent voter ballot application that is submitted and missing a signature is subject to the requirements of sections 761 and 766a.

- (4) An absent voter ballot application submitted before a primary election may be for either that primary election only, or for that primary election and for each election that follows the primary election in that year. An absent voter ballot application submitted before a presidential primary election may be for that presidential primary election only, or for that presidential primary election and for each election that follows the presidential primary election in that year.
- (5) A registered elector has the right to have an absent voter ballot sent to that elector before each election by submitting a single, signed absent voter ballot application that covers all future elections.
- (6) An individual may submit a voter registration application and an absent voter ballot application at the same time. Immediately after the voter registration application for that individual is approved, the clerk must verify the absent voter ballot application and issue an absent voter ballot to that individual as provided under section 761. An individual who submits a voter registration application and an absent voter ballot application at the same time and in person on the day of an election must vote the absent voter ballot at the city or township clerk's office.
- (7) The clerk of a city or township shall have absent voter ballot application forms available in the clerk's office at all times. The clerk of a city or township shall provide an absent voter ballot application form to an individual on a verbal or written request and provide the application to the individual in person, electronically, or by United States mail, postage prepaid with a postage prepaid return envelope, as requested by the individual. In addition, the secretary of state, or any county, city, or township clerk, may provide an absent voter ballot application to a registered elector in person, electronically, or by United States mail, with prepaid return postage, without a request from that registered elector. The absent voter ballot application must be in substantially the following form:

WARNING

(Signature)

You must be a United States citizen to vote. If you are not a United States citizen, you will not be issued an absent voter ballot.

An individual making a false statement in this absent voter ballot application is guilty of a misdemeanor. It is a violation of Michigan election law for an individual other than those listed in the instructions to return, offer to return, agree to return, or solicit to return your absent voter ballot application to the clerk. An assistant authorized by the clerk who receives absent voter ballot applications at a location other than the clerk's office must have credentials signed by the clerk. Ask to see the individual's credentials before entrusting your application with an individual claiming to have the clerk's authorization to return your application.

Certificate of Authorized Registered Elector Returning Absent Voter Ballot Application

I certify that my name is	and my address is	; that I am delivering the absent voter
ballot application of	at the applicant's request; that	t I did not solicit or request to return the
application; that I have not made a	ny markings on the application;	that I have not altered the application in any
way; that I have not influenced the	e applicant; and that I am aware	that a false statement in this certificate is a
violation of Michigan election law.		

(Date) (Signature)"

(8) The following instructions for an applicant for an absent voter ballot must be included with each application furnished an applicant:

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICANTS FOR ABSENT VOTER BALLOTS

- Step 1. After completely filling out the application, sign and date the application in the place designated. Your signature must appear on the application or you may not receive an absent voter ballot.
 - Step 2. Deliver the application by 1 of the following methods:
- (a) Place the application in the postage prepaid return envelope provided by the clerk and addressed to the clerk, or place the application in another envelope that is addressed to the appropriate clerk and place the necessary postage on that return envelope, and deposit the return envelope in the United States mail or with another postal service, express mail service, parcel post service, or common carrier.
 - (b) Deliver the application personally to the clerk's office, to the clerk, or to an authorized assistant of the clerk.
- (c) In either (a) or (b), a member of the immediate family of the voter including a father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent, or grandchild or an individual residing in the elector's household may mail or deliver the application to the clerk for the applicant.
- (d) If an applicant cannot return the application in any of the above methods, the applicant may select any registered elector to return the application. The individual returning the application must sign and return the certificate at the bottom of the application.
- (9) For a presidential primary election, the secretary of state shall revise the absent voter ballot application form described in subsection (7) to require that a presidential primary elector indicate a political party ballot selection when requesting an absent voter ballot and provide a separate form for a presidential primary elector who has previously applied for an absent voter ballot to indicate or change a political party ballot selection.
- (10) An elector may request delivery of the elector's absent voter ballot to an address that is not the elector's registration address. In addition, an elector may request delivery of the elector's absent voter ballot to a post office box if the post office box is where the absent voter normally receives personal mail, and the elector does not receive mail at the elector's registration address.
- (11) An individual shall not be in possession of a signed absent voter ballot application except for the applicant, a member of the applicant's immediate family, an individual residing in the applicant's household, an individual whose job normally includes the handling of mail, but only during the course of the individual's employment, a registered elector requested by the applicant to return the application, or a clerk, assistant of the clerk, or other authorized election official. A registered elector who is requested by the applicant to return the applicant's absent voter ballot application shall sign the certificate on the absent voter ballot application.
- (12) An individual who prints and distributes absent voter ballot applications shall print on the application the warning, certificate of authorized registered elector returning absent voter ballot application, and instructions required by this section.
- (13) An individual who makes a false statement in an absent voter ballot application is guilty of a misdemeanor. An individual who forges a signature on an absent voter ballot application is guilty of a felony. An individual who is not authorized in this act and who both distributes absent voter ballot applications to absent voters and returns those absent voter ballot applications to a clerk or assistant of the clerk is guilty of a misdemeanor.
- (14) The absent voter ballot application of an elector who is a program participant, as that term is defined in section 3 of the address confidentiality program act, 2020 PA 301, MCL 780.853, is confidential and not subject to disclosure under the freedom of information act, 1976 PA 442, MCL 15.231 to 15.246.

Sec. 761. (1) If the clerk of a city or township receives an application for an absent voter ballot, the clerk must immediately determine if the applicant is registered to vote in that city or township and if the signature on the application agrees sufficiently with the signature on file for the individual as required in subsection (2). The clerk must immediately, upon verification of the application or, if the application is received and verified before the printing of the absent voter ballots, as soon as the absent voter ballots are received by the clerk, forward by mail, postage prepaid, or deliver the absent voter ballot to the applicant. The clerk must include with the absent voter ballot a postage prepaid absent voter ballot return envelope. A clerk shall not send an absent voter ballot to an applicant by first-class mail after 5 p.m. on the fourth day before an election. If the clerk of a city or township receives an application for an absent voter ballot from an applicant who is a program participant, as that term is defined in section 3 of the address confidentiality program act, 2020 PA 301, MCL 780.853, then the city or township clerk shall mail an absent voter ballot to that program participant at the designated address provided to that program participant by the department of the attorney general under the address confidentiality program act, 2020 PA 301, MCL 780.851 to 780.873. If the clerk of a city or township receives an absent voter ballot application after the deadline for a clerk to mail an absent voter ballot by first-class mail to the applicant under this subsection, and the clerk does not otherwise promptly provide the applicant with the absent voter ballot, the clerk must immediately notify the applicant that the applicant's absent voter ballot application was rejected as not timely received and notify the applicant of the alternative methods of voting available for that election. The clerk must notify the applicant by telephone, email, or text message, if available. In the absence of the applicant's telephone number or email address, the clerk must notify the applicant by United States mail. The clerk may also provide notice to the applicant by any other available methods of contact. Electronic notification of the rejection of the application under section 764c that provides the information required by this subsection constitutes sufficient notification to the applicant. However, an absent voter ballot application that is rejected must still be processed for any future elections indicated on that absent voter ballot application. If a county clerk receives an application for an absent voter ballot from an individual, the county clerk shall immediately forward that absent voter ballot application to the appropriate city or township clerk where that individual resides. If a city or township clerk receives an application for an absent voter ballot from an individual who is registered to vote in a different city or township, that clerk must immediately contact the individual to determine where the individual resides and should be registered to vote. If the city or township clerk determines that the individual is registered to vote in a different city or township, the city or township clerk must electronically forward the application to the clerk of the city or township in which the individual is registered.

- (2) The signature on file must be used to determine the genuineness of a signature on an application for an absent voter ballot. Signature comparisons must be made using the procedures required under section 766a. If the clerk of a city or township rejects an absent voter ballot application because the signature on the absent voter ballot application does not agree sufficiently with the signature on file or because the elector failed to sign the absent voter ballot application, the applicant must be provided notice and the opportunity to cure the deficiency as provided under section 766a. The notice must inform the applicant that the applicant must cure the deficiency by 4 p.m. on the fourth day before the election in order to receive an absent voter ballot by first-class mail. If the applicant cures the deficiency as provided under section 766a by 4 p.m. on the fourth day before the election, the clerk must immediately send an absent voter ballot and a postage prepaid absent voter ballot return envelope to the applicant as provided under subsection (1).
- (3) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, and except for ballots delivered pursuant to an emergency absent voter ballot application under section 759b, absent voter ballots must be mailed or delivered to the applicant at the applicant's registration address unless the applicant requests that the absent voter ballot be sent to a different address as provided on the applicant's absent voter ballot application. In addition, a clerk may mail or deliver an absent voter ballot, on request of the applicant, to a post office box if the post office box is where the applicant normally receives personal mail and the applicant does not receive mail at the applicant's registration address. Subject to subsections (6) and (7), an absent voter ballot may be delivered to an applicant in person at the clerk's office.
- (4) The clerk shall enclose with the ballot a postage prepaid return envelope properly addressed to the clerk and bearing on the back of the return envelope a printed statement in substantially the following form:

 TO BE COMPLETED

Name of Voter Street Address or R.R. or Program Participant Identification Number City or Township Ward Precinct Date of Election

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE ABSENT VOTER

I assert that I am a United States citizen and a registered elector of the city or township named above. I am voting as an absent voter in conformity with state election law. Unless otherwise indicated below, I personally marked the ballot enclosed in this envelope without exhibiting it to any other individual.

I further assert that this absent voter ballot is being returned to the clerk or an assistant of the clerk by me personally; by public postal service, express mail service, parcel post service, or other common carrier; by a member of my immediate family; or by an individual residing in my household.

DATE:	SIGN HERE X			
		Signature of Absent Voter		
	The above form	n must be signed or your vote may n	not be counted.	
	AN ABSENT VOTER WHO) KNOWINGLY MAKES A FALSE	STATEMENT IS GUILTY	
		OF A MISDEMEANOR.		
	TO BE COMPLE	ETED ONLY IF VOTER IS ASSIST	ED IN VOTING	
		BY ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL		
I assist	ted the above named absent	voter who is disabled or otherwise	unable to mark the ballot in marking	
		-	rections. The absent voter ballot was	
inserted ir	the return envelope without	t being exhibited to any other indivi	idual.	
Sig	nature of Individual	Street Address	City or Township	
	Assisting Voter	or R.R.		
Printed N	ame of Individual Assisting V	7oter		
AN INDIV	TIDUAL WHO ASSISTS AN A	ABSENT VOTER AND WHO KNO	WINGLY MAKES A FALSE	
STATEMI	ENT IS GUILTY OF A FELO	NY.		

WARNING

INDIVIDUALS WHO CAN LEGALLY BE IN POSSESSION OF AN ABSENT VOTER BALLOT ISSUED TO AN ABSENT VOTER ARE LIMITED TO THE ABSENT VOTER; AN INDIVIDUAL WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE ABSENT VOTER'S IMMEDIATE FAMILY OR RESIDES IN THE ABSENT VOTER'S HOUSEHOLD AND WHO HAS BEEN ASKED BY THE ABSENT VOTER TO RETURN THE BALLOT; AN INDIVIDUAL WHOSE JOB IT IS TO HANDLE MAIL BEFORE, DURING, OR AFTER BEING TRANSPORTED BY A PUBLIC POSTAL SERVICE, EXPRESS MAIL SERVICE, PARCEL POST SERVICE, OR COMMON CARRIER, BUT ONLY DURING THE NORMAL COURSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S EMPLOYMENT; AND THE CLERK, ASSISTANTS OF THE CLERK, AND OTHER AUTHORIZED ELECTION OFFICIALS OF THE CITY OR TOWNSHIP. ANY OTHER INDIVIDUAL IN POSSESSION OF AN ABSENT VOTER BALLOT IS GUILTY OF A FELONY.

- (5) An absent voter who knowingly makes a false statement on the absent voter ballot return envelope is guilty of a misdemeanor. An individual who assists an absent voter and who knowingly makes a false statement on the absent voter ballot return envelope is guilty of a felony.
- (6) If an elector applies for an absent voter ballot in person at a clerk's office before 4 p.m. on the day before election day, the city or township clerk shall not issue an absent voter ballot to that elector until the elector presents identification for election purposes. If an elector does not have identification for election purposes, the clerk shall inform the elector that the elector must sign an affidavit to that effect in front of the clerk before an absent voter ballot will be issued in person to that elector. If an elector signs an affidavit under this subsection, the clerk shall issue an absent voter ballot to that elector. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection and subsection (7), a clerk shall not issue an absent voter ballot in person to any elector after 4 p.m. on the day before election day. An elector who is in line at 4 p.m. on the day before election day must be issued an absent voter ballot. This subsection also applies to an individual who submits an absent voter ballot application by means other than in person at a clerk's office, but who receives that individual's absent voter ballot in the clerk's office.
- (7) An individual who registers to vote or who updates the individual's voter registration on election day in accordance with section 497 may apply for and complete an absent voter ballot in person at a clerk's office on election day. The individual shall receive the absent voter ballot, mark the absent voter ballot in a clerk's office, and return the absent voter ballot to the clerk in the absent voter ballot return envelope. An individual who is in line to register to vote or to update the individual's voter registration at 8 p.m. on election day must be permitted

to register to vote or update the individual's voter registration, apply for an absent voter ballot, and vote the absent voter ballot after 8 p.m., including after 11:59 p.m. on election day if necessary. An individual who registers to vote on election day and who is in line to apply for an absent voter ballot at 8 p.m. on election day must be permitted to apply for an absent voter ballot and vote the absent voter ballot after 8 p.m., including after 11:59 p.m. on election day if necessary.

Sec. 766. (1) On receipt of any envelope containing the marked ballot of an absent voter, the city or township clerk shall determine whether the ballot is approved for tabulation by verifying both of the following:

- (a) The elector is a registered elector and has not voted in person in that election.
- (b) Using the procedures required under section 766a, the signature on the absent voter ballot return envelope agrees sufficiently with the elector's signature on file.
- (2) Subject to section 510(8), if the city or township clerk verifies the information in subsection (1)(a) and (b), the clerk shall approve the absent voter ballot for tabulation and record in the qualified voter file that the absent voter ballot has been approved for tabulation. Subject to subsection (3), if the city or township clerk is not able to verify the information in subsection (1)(a) and (b), the clerk must reject the absent voter ballot return envelope.
- (3) If a city or township clerk rejects an absent voter ballot return envelope because the signature on the absent voter ballot return envelope is missing or does not agree sufficiently with the elector's signature on file, the elector must be permitted an opportunity to cure the deficiency as provided under section 766a until 5 p.m. on the third day following the election in order for the absent voter ballot, if otherwise valid, to be accepted for tabulation.
- (4) If an absent voter ballot return envelope that is eligible to be cured is not cured by the close of polls on election day, that absent voter ballot return envelope must be retained at the clerk's office, and must not be turned over to the board of election inspectors or to an absent voter counting board. An absent voter ballot return envelope that is cured after the close of the polls on election day, but before 5 p.m. on the third day following the election, must be accepted and the ballot tabulated if the elector has not voted in person in that election. An absent voter ballot return envelope that is not cured by 5 p.m. on the third day following the election remains rejected.
- (5) On receipt of a cure form, as provided under section 766a, that resolves the signature deficiency on an elector's absent voter ballot return envelope, the clerk shall approve the ballot for tabulation.
- (6) Not later than the sixth day after election day, each city or township clerk shall deliver the absent voter ballot return envelopes that have been cured under subsection (4) to the county clerk in a ballot container. The absent voter ballots in these cured absent voter ballot return envelopes shall be tabulated by the county clerk in a meeting of the board of county canvassers.

Sec. 766a. (1) A clerk may determine that a signature on an elector's absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot envelope does not agree sufficiently with the signature on file only after reviewing the signature using the process set forth in this section.

- (2) An elector's signature is invalid only if it differs in significant and obvious respects from the elector's signature on file. Slight dissimilarities must be resolved in favor of the elector. Exact signature matches are not required to determine that a signature agrees sufficiently with the signature on file.
- (3) If a clerk determines that the elector's signature on the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope is missing or does not agree sufficiently with the signature on file, the clerk shall reject the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope and provide the elector with notice and the opportunity to cure the deficiency as provided in this section. The clerk shall notify the elector of all of the following:
- (a) The nature of the deficiency and that the deficiency has resulted in the rejection of the elector's absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope.
- (b) The need to cure the deficiency in order for the absent voter ballot application to be accepted or for the absent voter ballot to be tabulated.
 - (c) How to cure the deficiency.
 - (d) The deadline for curing the deficiency.
 - (e) The alternative methods of voting if the deficiency is not cured.
- (4) The clerk shall notify the elector of the deficiency described in subsection (3) within the deadlines specified under section 766b. The clerk must notify the elector by telephone, email, or text message, if available. In the absence of the elector's telephone number or email address, the clerk must notify the elector by United States mail. The clerk may also provide notice to the elector by any other available methods of contact. Electronic notification of the rejection of the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope under section 764c that provides the information required by this section constitutes sufficient notification to the elector.

- (5) An elector may cure a deficiency described in subsection (3) by completing and submitting a cure form. The secretary of state shall prescribe the content and requirements of the cure form. An elector shall be permitted to receive and return a cure form electronically, in person, or by mail with postage prepaid as a supplement to the prepaid postage for the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope. The city or township clerk in which the elector is registered may physically collect a cure form from the elector. A cure form must provide the elector the option to cure a deficiency in the elector's absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope by signing the statement required for the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope under section 759 or 761. The secretary of state shall modify the statements to reflect that the elector is signing a cure form for the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope rather than the original absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope. An elector must be permitted to submit an electronic image of the elector's physical signature in lieu of a physical signature for a cure form returned electronically. A clerk shall accept a cure form submitted under this subsection if the signature on the cure form agrees sufficiently with the signature on file, using the process as provided in this section. If the clerk determines that the signature on the cure form does not agree sufficiently with the signature on file, the clerk shall reject the cure form and contact the elector to provide information on other options to cure the deficiency and to provide the alternative methods of voting available for that election.
- (6) The secretary of state may issue instructions to clerks to provide electors with other options, other than by providing a signature under subsection (5), to cure the deficiency in the elector's absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope.
 - (7) As used in this chapter, "signature on file" means any of the following:
 - (a) Any signature of an elector contained in the qualified voter file.
- (b) If the qualified voter file does not contain a copy of an elector's digitized signature, or is not accessible, the signature of the elector contained on the master card.
- (c) Only for purposes of the signature comparison conducted under section 766 for an elector's absent voter ballot envelope, the signature on the elector's absent voter ballot application.
- Sec. 766b. (1) Beginning 45 days before an election, if an absent voter ballot application or an absent voter ballot return envelope is received 6 or more calendar days before an election, the clerk must make a reasonable effort to verify or reject the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope by the end of the next business day following the receipt of that application or return envelope. If the clerk determines that the elector's signature on the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope is missing or does not agree sufficiently with the signature on file, the clerk must notify the elector as provided under section 766a by the end of the next business day following the receipt of the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope.
- (2) Subject to subsection (3), if an absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope is received 5 or fewer days before an election or on election day, the clerk must verify or reject the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope by the end of the calendar day of receiving that application or return envelope. Subject to subsection (3), if the clerk determines that the elector's signature on the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope is missing or does not agree sufficiently with the signature on file, the clerk must notify the elector as provided under section 766a by the end of the calendar day on which the application or return envelope was received.
- (3) If the clerk determines that the elector's signature on an absent voter ballot application is missing or does not agree sufficiently with the signature on file after 4 p.m. on the fourth day before the election, the elector must be notified of the rejection of the elector's absent voter ballot application under section 761.
- (4) If an absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope comes into the physical control of the clerk's office before or during the clerk's scheduled business hours on a day, that absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope is considered received by the clerk on that day. If an absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope comes into the physical control of the clerk's office after the end of the clerk's scheduled business hours on a day, or if the absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope comes into the physical control of the clerk's office on a day on which the clerk does not have scheduled business hours, that absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope is considered received by the clerk on the first subsequent day on which the clerk has scheduled business hours.
- (5) Each absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope retrieved from an absent voter ballot drop box before or during the clerk's scheduled business hours is considered received by the clerk on the day the application or return envelope is retrieved. An absent voter ballot application or absent voter ballot return envelope retrieved from an absent voter ballot drop box after the end of the clerk's scheduled business hours on a

day, or deposited in an absent voter ballot drop box on a day on which the clerk does not have scheduled business hours, is not considered received by the clerk until the first subsequent day on which the clerk has scheduled business hours.

- (6) An absent voter ballot return envelope that is collected by an election official through the procedure provided under 764b(4) or (5) is considered received when the election official comes into physical possession of the absent voter ballot return envelope.
- (7) Nothing in this section prevents a clerk from providing a notification to an elector under section 761 or 766 in a more timely manner than required.

Enacting section 1. Section 759c of the Michigan election law, 1954 PA 116, MCL 168.759c, is repealed.

Enacting section 2. This amendatory act does not take effect unless all of the following bills of the 102nd Legislature are enacted into law:

- (a) Senate Bill No. 339.
- (b) Senate Bill No. 367.

Secretary of the Senate

Clerk of the House of Representatives