

Election Laws
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Voting Rights are a 2013 LWVIL Legislative Priority

As with previous Issues Briefing Reports this report is in two parts. The first covers election laws legislative activity in the 97th Illinois General Assembly from January 2012 through December 2012. The second part provides information about the administration of elections.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY During the second half of the legislative session the League watched several bills that amended the Illinois Election Code. Six bills became law and eight died when the General Assembly adjourned in December. The League took action on two election bills: **SB 3722** this session's Omnibus Election Laws bill that became **PA 97-0766**.

The League opposed **SB 3669** that provides that polls be open until 6:00 p.m. (now 7:00 p.m.). LWVIL sent a brief statement to the Senate Executive Committee asking them to consider the proposal carefully and to evaluate the potential effects of this change. The bill was amended in committee replacing the original wording. The final bill dealt with polling place signs, not polling place hours. No Time for Action was sent on this legislation. Only a brief description of legislation that became law is included here.

PA 97-1044 – amended the Election Code providing that two or more petitions filed within the last hours of the filing deadline shall be deemed filed simultaneously; effective January 1, 2013.

PA 97-0681 -- amended the election code providing that a person who filed a statement of candidacy as an established political party's candidate at a general primary, or voted at an established political party's general primary may not file a statement of candidacy as an independent candidate, or as a different party's candidate at the immediately following general election. We were not watching this legislation because it does not relate to any of our positions, but watched it because it was an interesting piece of legislation.

PA 97-1069 – amended the Circuit Courts Act, not the election code. It deals with the election of judges in the 23rd judicial circuit specifying that there shall be no at large circuit judgeships and only resident circuit judges shall be elected. Other changes were made also.

PA 97-0847 – created the Judicial Privacy Act, referred to as the Michael Lefkow and Donna Humphrey Judicial Privacy Improvement Act of 2012, and amends the Election Code allowing redaction of a judicial candidate's home address in a certificate of nomination or nomination papers after the Election Code objection period. It was signed by the governor on July 24, 2012.

PA 97-0766 – amended the Election Code relating to campaign contributions. It defined independent expenditure committees; removed contribution limits for candidate political committees in races where an independent expenditure exceeds a specified amount; has specific

reporting requirement for a natural person who makes independent expenditures; changes the determination of contribution limit violations; lifts some record-keeping requirements; allows PACs to

receive contributions from corporations, associations, labor organizations or their committees; clarifies that an Illinois party committee may accept unlimited transfers from an affiliated federal party; and specifies the delivery method for notifying committees of fines assessed against them.

It was the above portion that prompted LWVIL to issue a TFA calling for the governor's veto. However, this proposal (SB 3722) was also this session's Omnibus Election Laws bill that included the following changes that are voter friendly:

1. The grace period for registration of voters was extended to the third day before the primary or election day (previously the 7th day).
2. For the 2012 general election each appropriate authority shall conduct grace period registration and early voting in a high traffic location on the campus of a public university within the election authority's jurisdiction.
3. Made changes in the form of the Application for an Absentee ballot.
4. Provides that the period for early voting by personal appearance begins the 15th day before the election (previously the 22nd day) and extends through the 3rd (previously the 5th day) before the elections.

PA 97-1134 took effect on December 3, 2012. This legislation introduced in February as SB 3338 made changes in the Election Code relating to a campaign free zone near polling places for primary elections. It was later amended to include polling places for absentee ballots. Towards the end of the session in May when it was on second reading in the House it was re-referred to the House Rules Committee. On November 27th Rep. Currie introduced an amendment to SB 3338 replacing everything in the bill making changes in the filing dates for candidate nominating petitions in the 2013 consolidated election; and providing for a special election to be held on April 9, 2013 to fill a vacancy in the office of representative in Congress if the vacancy occurs less than 60 days following the 2012 general election. It passed both Houses unanimously and was signed by the governor immediately.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITY

The State Board of Elections provided assistance to two counties in removing duplicate voter registrations from their files.

The contract that the state had with Catalyst ended in June 2012. Catalyst had developed the Illinois Voter Registration System. The system is now being maintained by the State Board of Elections internal staff.

Local election authorities and the State Board of Elections are working cooperatively and effectively to remove duplicate voter registrations from the database. The number of duplicate registrations continues to go down.

The State Board of Elections posted the results of the November 6th general election following certification of the vote. Voter turnout was 70.20%, a little less than in 2008 when it was 71%.

Total voters registered: 7,520,722

Total ballots cast: 5,279,259

