

Election Laws

2008 Issues Briefing

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The first session of the 95th General Assembly passed a number of election related bills including another Omnibus Elections bill (SB 662) that became PA 95-699. The winter issue of *The Illinois Voter* reported some of the highlights of this legislation. A more complete summary of its provisions can be found [HERE](#). The *Voter* also told of six other elections bills that became law, including the poll watching bill that was introduced at the League's request. (See *The Voter* for details).

The 2008 session is barely underway due in large part to the shift in the primary election. On February 13th seven election laws bills were scheduled for hearing by the House Elections & Campaign Finance Committee. Five of them were introduced this year and two were held over from 2007. Among them are duplicate House Joint Resolutions to create a campaign finance task force to study and recommend changes in the statutory system of financing campaigns for Illinois' elective offices. There is a resolution calling for an amendment to the Illinois constitution that would change the voting age to 17 or any other "younger" voting age required by the United States and another resolution asking Congress to make permanent all the provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The other bills address procedural matters or clarify ballot instructions.

Of interest to the League is HB4403 that requires a person seeking to vote in person on election day present a government-issued photo identification to the election judge and requires that each election authority issue a photo identification card to each registered voter in its jurisdiction who cannot afford to obtain another government-issued identification. With all the press coverage about voter ID's being required in several states and the case now before the U.S. Supreme Court, it is not surprising to have such legislation being proposed in Illinois.

Senate Bill 1872 introduced by Senator Don Harmon should be of interest to the League. It proposes to amend the election code by removing the greater nominating petition requirement for county offices in DuPage County (see summary of SB662). Many people were disappointed that this proviso passed out of committee without change and remained in SB662 to its adoption. This separate piece of legislation it may have a better chance for success. SB1872 is scheduled for hearing in the Senate Local Government Committee.

As of this writing, it is still too early to tell if the Primary Election has revealed any problems in the electoral process that may prompt legislative proposals. At its January meeting the State Board of Elections discussed its 2008 legislative agenda. On it are

- rules relating to petitions for constitutional amendments and statewide advisory referenda;
- remedies for some campaign finance problems, the elimination of in-person absentee voting and the extension of the early voting period to the Monday before the election;
- setting a firm deadline for amending vote canvasses, offering some "clean-up" language for SB662 and clarifying when special Congressional elections are required.