

2007 OMNIBUS ELECTIONS BILL
2008 Issues Briefing
Mary-Lou Aagaard, LWVIL Issue Specialist

The 2007 Omnibus Elections Bill (SB662) became law on November 9, 2007. This summary of the legislation has been arranged alphabetically by subject. It is not all inclusive but covers many provisions of particular interest to League members. To see the complete text, go to the General Assembly's website at www.ilga.gov/legislation.

Candidate Certification. Write-in candidates must file at least 61 days prior to the election except candidates whose petitions are challenged and the objection sustained. These persons may file as write-in candidates 7 days before the election.

Listings of candidates must indicate when objections have been filed and show the status of the objection.

Election Judges. High school juniors are now eligible to serve as election judges under the same rules as high school seniors. Local election authorities may also establish a program to permit students who are not eligible to vote in the precinct or county to serve as election judges if the following criteria are met:

- 1) is a U.S. citizen
- 2) is enrolled in a community college, public or private college or university
- 3) has a GPA 3.0 on a 4.0 scale
- 4) completes a training course
- 5) indicates a political affiliation

Pay for election judges was increased by \$20 but the increase does not take effect until after the February 2008 primary election.

Petitions. A process for handling objections to petitions is established. The independent candidates' signature requirement exception has been removed. The number of signatures required for most offices has been clarified. The number of signatures required for county offices was increased in DuPage County only.

The number of signatures required on petitions for questions of public policy was increased beginning in 2009.

Polling Place. Election judges are to place signage at, or near, the entrance to each polling place indicating the proper entrance to the polling place. Judges are to be sure that a sign identifying the polling place location is placed on a nearby roadway. The State Board of Elections is to supply signage guidelines to the local election authorities.

A posting of the offices to be voted is to be displayed in the polling place. Early voting rules and procedures are created including guidelines for setting up early voting locations based on population as determined by the federal census.

Poll Watching. Local election authorities may no longer require organizations that request credentials to submit names or other information about the poll watchers before making the credentials available. When the votes are tallied in the precinct the election judges are to post the precinct totals in a conspicuous place and allow time for the poll watchers who are present in the polling place to copy the information from the posted copy.

State Board of Elections. The Board's powers have been extended to allow the Board to report violations of election laws to the Attorney General. Previously the Board reported violations to the appropriate state's attorney. The Board may still report violations to the appropriate state's attorney.

Voting Equipment. Voting equipment must be able to detect ballots that have been under-voted for state constitutional offices and reject these ballots initially. Voters should be given an opportunity to change their vote.

As part of their application for state approval voting equipment vendors must pay a fee. No voting equipment will be approved if the fee is not paid. The State Board of Elections sets the fee schedule.

Voter Registration. Persons registering by mail must vote in person the first time, not by a mailed absentee ballot, unless the person provides the appropriate election authority (county clerk, board of commissioners) with sufficient proof of identity and the election authority verifies the person's proof of identity. Persons who fail to provide adequate identification will be notified by the election authority that the voter registration is not fully completed and the person is ineligible to vote either by mail or in person until proof is presented. The same documents required for in-person registration are acceptable for mail registration.

Vote Tabulations. Rules now permit that absentee ballots received before the polls close and/or before the counting of provisional votes shall be counted. In accordance with rules set by the State Board of Elections vote totals must be filed in electronic format with the State Board of Elections within 22 days of each election. The requirements for posting and distributing the precinct election totals have been modified.