

# HOUSE . . . . . No. 4820

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two branches with reference to the Senate amendment (striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in place thereof the text contained in Senate document numbered 2764) of the House Bill relative to voting options in response to COVID-19 (House, No. 4778), reports recommending passage of the accompanying bill (House, No. 4820). June 30, 2020.

John J. Lawn, Jr.	Barry R. Finegold
Michael J. Moran	Cynthia Stone Creem
Bradford Hill	Ryan C. Fattman

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 4820**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court  
(2019-2020)**  
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An Act relative to voting options in response to COVID-19.

*Whereas*, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to forthwith provide for increased voting options in response to COVID-19, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health and convenience.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           SECTION 1. Subsection (b) of section 25B of chapter 54 of the General Laws, as  
2    appearing in the 2018 Official Edition, is hereby amended by striking out the last sentence and  
3    inserting in place thereof the following sentence:- No application shall be deemed to be  
4    seasonably filed unless it is received in the office of the city or town clerk or registrars of voters  
5    before 5 P.M. on the fourth business day preceding the election.

6           SECTION 2. Said section 25B of said chapter 54, as so appearing, is hereby further  
7    amended by striking out subsection (c) and inserting in place thereof the following subsection:-

8           (c) The voting period for in person early voting shall run from the eleventh business day  
9    preceding the general election until the close of business on the business day preceding the  
10   business day before the election; provided, however, that if the eleventh business day before the

11 election falls on a legal holiday the early voting period shall begin on the first business day prior  
12 to the legal holiday. The voting period for early voting by mail shall begin as soon as all  
13 necessary early voting materials have been received by the local election official pursuant to  
14 subsection (h).

15 SECTION 3. Section 89 of said chapter 54, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
16 striking out the first paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

17 Any form of written communication evidencing a desire to have an absent voting ballot  
18 be sent for use for voting at an election shall be given the same effect as an application made in  
19 the form prescribed by the state secretary. No application for an absent voting ballot to be sent by  
20 mail shall be deemed to be seasonably filed unless it is received in the office of the city or town  
21 clerk or registrars of voters on or before the fourth business day preceding the election for which  
22 the ballot is being requested. No application for an absent voting ballot to be voted in person  
23 shall be deemed to be seasonably filed unless it is received in the office of the city or town clerk  
24 or registrars of voters on or before noon on the day preceding the election for which such absent  
25 voting ballot is requested; provided, however, that if the day preceding such election is a Sunday  
26 or legal holiday, then it shall be received by such clerk or registrars before 5 P.M. on the last  
27 previous day on which such office is open. An application by a voter admitted to a health care  
28 facility after noon of the seventh day before the relevant election, as provided in subsection (c) of  
29 section 91B, may be received up until the time the polls close.

30 SECTION 4. Section 91B of said chapter 54, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
31 striking out, in line 21, the words “after noon of the fifth” and inserting in place thereof the  
32 following words:- on or after the seventh.

33 SECTION 5. Section 92 of said chapter 54, as so appearing, is hereby amended by  
34 striking out, in line 11, the words “eighty-seven, or” and inserting in place thereof the following  
35 words:- 87; via a secured municipal drop box, where provided; or.

36 SECTION 6. (a) As used in sections 6 to 14, inclusive, the following words shall, unless  
37 the context clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:-

38 “Application”, an application to vote early by mail.

39 “Central registry”, the central registry of voters established pursuant to section 47C of  
40 chapter 51 of the General Laws.

41 “General election” or “election”, the general election scheduled for November 3, 2020.

42 “Primary election” or “primary”, the primary election scheduled for September 1, 2020.

43 “Qualified voter” or “voter”, a voter qualified pursuant to section 1 of chapter 51 of the  
44 General Laws.

45 “State secretary,” the secretary of the commonwealth.

46 (b) Notwithstanding section 25B of chapter 54 of the General Laws or any other general  
47 or special law to the contrary, there shall be early voting by mail for the primary election and  
48 general election.

49 (c) The election officers and registrars of every city or town shall allow any qualified  
50 voter to cast an early ballot by mail for the primary election and general election and any city or  
51 town election held at the same time.

52 (d)(1) The state secretary shall, not later than July 15, 2020, mail to all registered voters  
53 who registered to vote before July 1 at their residential addresses or mailing addresses if different  
54 from their residential addresses listed in the central registry an application for said voter to be  
55 permitted to vote early by mail for the primary election; provided, however, that the state  
56 secretary shall not send an application to any voter whose previous application for an absent or  
57 early ballot for the primary election or for all elections in calendar year 2020 has been accepted.

58 (2) The state secretary shall, not later than September 14, 2020, mail to all registered  
59 voters who registered to vote before September 1 at their residential addresses or mailing  
60 addresses if different from their residential addresses listed in the central registry an application  
61 for said voter to be permitted to vote early by mail in the general election; provided, however,  
62 that the state secretary shall not be required to send an application to any voter whose previous  
63 application for an absent or early ballot for the general election or for all elections in calendar  
64 year 2020 has been accepted.

65 (3) The election officers and registrars of every city or town shall include an application  
66 for a voter to be permitted to vote early by mail with the acknowledgement notice sent to any  
67 person registering to vote or changing their voter registration address: (i) on or after July 1, 2020  
68 and on or before August 22, 2020 for the primary election; and (ii) on or after September 1, 2020  
69 and on or before October 24, 2020 for the general election.

70 (4) The applications required pursuant to this subsection shall be in a form prescribed by  
71 the state secretary in accordance with state and federal law; provided, however, that said  
72 applications shall: (i) include clear instructions for completing and returning the application; (ii)

73 allow a voter to designate the mailing address to which the ballot shall be sent; and (iii) be pre-  
74 addressed to the local election official with postage guaranteed.

75 (5)(i) Each application mailed pursuant to this subsection shall be provided in any  
76 language required by the bilingual election requirements of the federal Voting Rights Act, 52  
77 U.S.C. § 10503.

78 (ii) Each application mailed to a voter in the city of Boston pursuant to this subsection  
79 shall include an option, which shall appear prominently on the application, to request a ballot  
80 printed in any language available at the voter's polling location pursuant to chapter 166 of the  
81 acts of 2014.

82 (6) The applications required pursuant to this subsection shall be made available on the  
83 websites of the state secretary and the election officers and registrars of every city or town.

84 (e)(1) A voter wishing to vote early by mail in the primary election shall complete the  
85 application to vote early by mail and shall return said application to the appropriate city or town  
86 clerk. Any form of written communication evidencing a desire to have an early voting ballot be  
87 sent for use for voting for the primary election shall be given the same effect as an application  
88 made in the form prescribed by the state secretary. Applications to vote early by mail for the  
89 primary election shall be acceptable if they are signed or submitted electronically; provided,  
90 however, that any electronic signature shall be written in substantially the same manner as a  
91 handwritten signature.

92 (2) No application to vote early by mail in the primary election shall be deemed to be  
93 seasonably filed unless it is received in the office of the local election official before 5 P.M. on  
94 Wednesday, August 26, 2020.

95 (f)(1) A voter wishing to vote early by mail in the general election shall complete the  
96 application and shall return said application to the appropriate city or town clerk. Applications to  
97 vote early by mail for the general election shall be acceptable if they are signed or submitted  
98 electronically; provided, however, that any electronic signature shall be written in substantially  
99 the same manner as a handwritten signature.

100 (2) No application to vote early by mail in the general election shall be deemed to be  
101 seasonably filed unless it is received in the office of the local election official before 5 P.M. on  
102 Wednesday, October 28, 2020.

103 (g)(1) Early voting ballots authorized pursuant to this section shall be mailed by the city  
104 or town clerk to voters as soon as such materials are available; provided, however, that said  
105 mailing shall include: (i) instructions for early voting; (ii) instructions for completing the ballot;  
106 (iii) an inner envelope where the ballot is placed after voting which contains an affidavit of  
107 compliance to be filled out by the voter; and (iv) an outer envelope that is pre-addressed to the  
108 local election official with postage guaranteed; provided, however, that a voter who has  
109 seasonably filed an application may receive an early voting ballot in person at the office of the  
110 city or town clerk. The state secretary shall seek to have included on the outer envelope with  
111 postage guaranteed required by this section a system which generates a postmark for determining  
112 the date upon which the envelope was mailed and, if such a postmark system cannot be  
113 implemented, the state secretary shall inform the clerks of the senate and house of  
114 representatives of efforts undertaken and impediments to developing such a system.

115 (2) Each early voting ballot authorized pursuant to this section shall be provided to the  
116 voter in the language required pursuant to paragraph (5) of subsection (d).

117 (h)(1) A voter in receipt of an early voting ballot for the primary election pursuant to this  
118 section may complete and return the ballot by: (i) delivering it in person to the office of the  
119 appropriate city or town clerk; (ii) dropping it in a secured municipal drop box; or (iii) mailing it  
120 to the appropriate city or town clerk.

121 (2) A voter in receipt of an early voting ballot for the general election pursuant to this  
122 section may complete and return the ballot by: (i) delivering it in person to the office of the  
123 appropriate city or town clerk; (ii) dropping it in a secured municipal drop box; or (iii) mailing it  
124 to the appropriate city or town clerk.

125 (3) All early voting ballots submitted by mail, delivered in person to the office of the city  
126 or town clerk or returned to a secured municipal drop box as provided by this section shall be  
127 received by the city or town clerk before the hour fixed for closing the polls on the day of the  
128 primary election or general election; provided, however, that an early voting ballot cast for the  
129 general election that is received not later than 5 P.M. on November 6, 2020 and mailed on or  
130 before November 3, 2020 shall be processed in accordance with the second paragraph of section  
131 95 of chapter 54 of the General Laws. A postmark, if legible, shall be evidence of the time of  
132 mailing.

133 (i) A voter wishing to apply to vote early by mail in the primary or general election and  
134 who needs accommodation by reason of disability may request such accommodation from the  
135 state secretary. Upon receiving information from the voter pursuant to the application in this  
136 section either by phone or electronically, the state secretary shall grant accommodations to the  
137 voter. Accommodations shall include, but not be limited to: (i) clear and electronic accessible  
138 instructions for completion, printing and returning of the ballot; (ii) an authorized accessible

139 blank electronic ballot that can be filled out electronically, printed and signed; provided,  
140 however, that the accessible electronic ballot marking system the voter utilizes to access their  
141 blank electronic ballot shall not collect or store any personally identifying information obtained  
142 in the process of filling out the ballot; (iii) an envelope to return the ballot to the voter's town or  
143 city clerk; and (iv) hole punched markers in place of a wet signature required for certification.  
144 The electronic instructions and accommodations in this section shall comply with requirements  
145 contained in Title II of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act and shall conform to the Web  
146 Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA and the National Institute of Standards and  
147 Technology report titled "Principles and guidelines for remote ballot marking systems." Upon  
148 printing the ballot, the voter shall place the ballot in the envelope provided by the state secretary.  
149 A voter with accommodations in receipt of an early voting ballot for the primary or general  
150 election pursuant to this section may complete and return the ballot by: (i) delivering it in person  
151 to the office of the appropriate city or town clerk; (ii) dropping it in a secured municipal drop  
152 box; or (iii) mailing it to the appropriate city or town clerk.

153 SECTION 7. (a) Notwithstanding section 25B of chapter 54 of the General Laws or any  
154 other general or special law to the contrary, there shall be early voting in person for the primary  
155 election and the general election.

156 (b)(1) The election officers and registrars of every city or town shall allow any qualified  
157 voter to cast an early ballot in person for the primary election during the early voting period,  
158 which shall begin on Saturday, August 22, 2020 and end on Friday, August 28, 2020. Early  
159 voting in person shall also apply to any city or town election held at the same time.

160 (2) The election officers and registrars of every city or town shall allow any qualified  
161 voter to cast a ballot in person for the general election during the early voting period, which shall  
162 begin on Saturday, October 17, 2020 and end on Friday, October 30, 2020. Early voting in  
163 person shall also apply to any city or town election held at the same time.

164 (3) Any qualified voter wishing to vote early in person in the primary or general election  
165 may do so at the time, manner and location prescribed in this section.

166 (c)(1) Early voting in person for the primary election shall be conducted on Saturday,  
167 August 22, 2020 and Sunday, August 23, 2020, as follows: (i) for municipalities with fewer than  
168 5,000 registered voters, for a period of a minimum of 2 hours each day; (ii) for municipalities  
169 with 5,000 or more registered voters but fewer than 20,000 registered voters, for a period of a  
170 minimum of 4 hours each day; (iii) for municipalities with 20,000 or more registered voters but  
171 fewer than 40,000 registered voters, for a period of a minimum of 5 hours each day; (iv) for  
172 municipalities with 40,000 or more registered voters but fewer than 75,000 registered voters, for  
173 a period of a minimum of 6 hours each day; and (v) for municipalities with 75,000 or more  
174 registered voters, for a period of a minimum of 8 hours each day. For each other day during the  
175 early voting period, early voting shall be conducted during the usual business hours of each city  
176 or town clerk. A city or town may, in its discretion, provide for additional early voting hours  
177 beyond the hours required by this paragraph.

178 (2) Early voting for the general election shall be conducted on Saturday, October 17,  
179 2020, Sunday, October 18, 2020, Saturday, October 24, 2020 and Sunday, October 25, 2020 as  
180 follows: (i) for municipalities with fewer than 5,000 registered voters, for a period of a minimum  
181 of 2 hours each day; (ii) for municipalities with 5,000 or more registered voters but fewer than

182 20,000 registered voters, for a period of a minimum of 4 hours each day; (iii) for municipalities  
183 with 20,000 or more registered voters but fewer than 40,000 registered voters, for a period of a  
184 minimum of 5 hours each day; (iv) for municipalities with 40,000 or more registered voters but  
185 fewer than 75,000 registered voters, for a period of a minimum of 6 hours each day; and (v) for  
186 municipalities with 75,000 or more registered voters, for a period of a minimum of 8 hours each  
187 day. For each other day during the early voting period, early voting shall be conducted during the  
188 usual business hours of each city or town clerk. A city or town may, in its discretion, provide for  
189 additional early voting hours beyond the hours required by this paragraph.

190 (d)(1) Each city and town shall establish an early voting site for the primary election and  
191 an early voting site for the general election that shall include the election office for the city or  
192 town; provided, however, that if the city or town determines that the office is unavailable or  
193 unsuitable for early voting in either the primary election or general election, the registrars of each  
194 city or town shall identify and provide for an alternative centrally-located, suitable and  
195 convenient public building within that city or town as an early voting site. A city or town may  
196 also provide for additional early voting sites for the primary election or general election at the  
197 discretion of the registrars for that city or town. Each early voting site shall be accessible to  
198 persons with disabilities in accordance with federal law.

199 (2) The designation of early voting sites for the primary election shall be made not later  
200 than August 7, 2020. Not later than August 14, 2020, and at least once during the voting period,  
201 the registrars for each city or town shall post the location of the early voting sites as well as the  
202 applicable dates and hours. Notice shall be conspicuously posted: (i) in the office of the city or  
203 town clerk or on the principal official bulletin board of each city or town; (ii) on any other public

204 building considered necessary; (iii) on the city or town’s website, if any; and (iv) on the website  
205 of the state secretary.

206 (3) The designation of early voting sites for the general election shall be made not later  
207 than October 2, 2020. Not later than October 9, 2020, and at least once during the voting period,  
208 the registrars for each city or town shall post the location of the early voting sites as well as the  
209 applicable dates and hours. Notice shall be conspicuously posted: (i) in the office of the city or  
210 town clerk or on the principal official bulletin board of each city or town; (ii) on any other public  
211 building considered necessary; (iii) on the city or town’s website, if any; and (iv) on the website  
212 of the state secretary.

213 (e) A qualified voter voting early in person shall be provided with a ballot and an  
214 envelope where the ballot is placed after voting which contains an affidavit of compliance to be  
215 filled out by the voter. A qualified voter voting early in person shall complete an affidavit under  
216 the regulations promulgated pursuant to this act, which shall include a notice of penalties under  
217 section 26 of chapter 56 of the General Laws.

218 (f) Prior to the beginning of early voting, the registrars for each city or town shall prepare  
219 a list for the early voting sites, containing the names and residences of all persons qualified to  
220 vote at each voting site, as the names and residences appear upon the annual register, and shall  
221 reasonably transmit the applicable list to the election officers at each early voting site designated  
222 by the registrars.

223 (g) The registrar or presiding official at the early voting site shall cause to be placed on  
224 the voting lists opposite the name of a qualified voter who participates in early voting the letters  
225 “EV” designating an early voter.

226 (h) The registrars shall prepare lists of all voters casting ballots pursuant to this section or  
227 section 6 during the early voting period and update the voter list in a manner prescribed by the  
228 state secretary.

229 (i) A city or town may opt to detail a sufficient number of police officers or constables  
230 for each early voting site for the primary election at the expense of the city or town to preserve  
231 order, protect the election officers and supervisors from any interference with their duties and aid  
232 in enforcing the laws relating to elections.

233 (j)(1) The absentee or early ballot of any voter who was eligible to vote at the time the  
234 ballot was cast shall not be deemed invalid solely because the voter became ineligible to vote by  
235 reason by death after casting the ballot. For the purposes of this section, the term “cast” shall  
236 mean that the voter has: (i) deposited the absentee or early ballot in the mail for ballots mailed;  
237 (ii) returned the absentee or early ballot to the appropriate election official either by hand or by  
238 depositing in the municipal drop box, where available; or (iii) completed voting in person at the  
239 clerk’s office or an early voting location.

240 (2) Section 100 of chapter 54 of the General Laws shall not apply to the primary election  
241 or general election or any other municipal election held at the same time.

242 (k) Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, any absent ballot cast  
243 pursuant to section 86 of chapter 54 of the General Laws or any early voting ballot cast pursuant  
244 to this section or section 6 may be deposited into a tabulator or a ballot box in a municipality or  
245 precinct that uses paper ballots, in advance of the date of the primary or the general election. All  
246 ballots received pursuant to this section or section 6 may be opened in advance of the date of the  
247 primary or the general election, in accordance with regulations promulgated by the state

248 secretary; provided, however, that such ballots shall be kept secured, locked and unexamined,  
249 and that no results shall be determined or announced until after the time polls close on the date of  
250 the primary or the general election. Disclosing any such result before such time shall be punished  
251 as a violation of section 14 of chapter 56 of the General Laws. Not later than August 1, 2020, the  
252 state secretary shall promulgate emergency regulations regarding the advance depositing of  
253 ballots.

254 SECTION 8. (a) Not later than August 3, 2020, the state secretary shall deliver to each  
255 city or town, in quantities as the state secretary determines necessary, the following papers: (i)  
256 official absentee and early voting ballots for the primary election, similar to the official ballot to  
257 be used at the primary election; provided, however, that a sufficient quantity of such ballots are  
258 printed in the languages necessary to accommodate the selection of a bilingual ballot by voters  
259 pursuant to paragraph 5 of subsection (d) of section 6; (ii) envelopes of sufficient size to contain  
260 the ballots specified in clause (i) bearing on their reverse the voter's affidavit in compliance with  
261 the requirements of subsection (j) of section 25B of chapter 54 of the General Laws; (iii) return  
262 envelopes for any ballot requested for voting by mail pre-addressed to the local election official  
263 with postage guaranteed; and (iv) instructions for voting by mail to be sent to each voter who  
264 requests to cast a ballot by mail.

265 (b) Not later than October 9, 2020, the state secretary shall deliver to each city or town, in  
266 quantities as the state secretary determines necessary, the following papers: (i) official absentee  
267 and early voting ballots, for the general election, similar to the official ballot to be used at the  
268 general election; provided, however, that a sufficient quantity of such ballots are printed in the  
269 languages necessary to accommodate the selection of a bilingual ballot by voters pursuant to  
270 paragraph 5 of subsection (d) of section 6; (ii) envelopes of sufficient size to contain the ballots

271 specified in clause (i) bearing on their reverse the voter's affidavit in compliance with the  
272 requirements of subsection (j) of said section 25B of said chapter 54; (iii) return envelopes for  
273 any ballot requested for voting by mail pre-addressed to the local election official with postage  
274 guaranteed; and (iv) instructions for voting by mail to be sent to each voter who requests to cast a  
275 ballot by mail.

276 SECTION 9. (a) Sections 37 and 38 of chapter 53 of the General Laws shall apply to  
277 unenrolled voters and voters enrolled in political designations voting early in the primary  
278 election. The registrar or presiding official at the early voting site shall cause the name of the  
279 party of the ballot being voted to be recorded on the voting list. Once the party selection has been  
280 recorded on the voting list, a voter cannot request or vote on the ballot of another party.

281 (b) The counting of early voting ballots including, but not limited to, informing election  
282 officers and any challengers present under section 85A of chapter 54 of the General Laws shall  
283 be set by 950 C.M.R. § 47.00, so far as applicable. All envelopes referred to in this section shall  
284 be retained with the ballots cast at the primary election and shall be preserved and destroyed in  
285 the manner provided by law for the retention, preservation or destruction of official ballots.

286 (c) The provisions of 950 C.M.R. § 47.00 shall apply to early voting at the primary  
287 election to the extent feasible; provided, however, that the state secretary shall promulgate rules  
288 to accommodate the dates set forth herein.

289 SECTION 10. Notwithstanding section 25B of chapter 54 of the General Laws or any  
290 other general or special law to the contrary, the election officers and registrars of every city or  
291 town shall allow any qualified voter to vote early by mail for any city or town election held on or  
292 before December 31, 2020.

293           SECTION 11. Notwithstanding section 24 of chapter 54 of the General Laws or any other  
294 general or special law to the contrary, the select board, board of selectmen, town council or city  
295 council may, by recorded and public vote, change any polling place to be used at the primary  
296 election or the general election at least 20 days prior to the date of the primary election or general  
297 election if it is determined that the public convenience or public health would be better served. If  
298 the select board, board of selectmen or town council determines that the public convenience or  
299 public health would be better served, they may house all polling places in a single building  
300 within the municipality, if such building is suitably equipped; provided, however, that alcoholic  
301 beverages shall not be served or consumed in that portion of a building used as a polling place,  
302 during voting hours or while ballots are being counted therein. In cities, the city council may  
303 designate polling places in non-adjacent precincts if they determine the public convenience or  
304 public health would be better served. In making a decision to change a polling place, the select  
305 board, board of selectmen, town council or city council shall evaluate and report on whether such  
306 change would have a disparate adverse impact on access to the polls on the basis of race, national  
307 origin, disability, income or age, and not later than 3 days prior to changing a polling place, shall  
308 make publicly available on its website and at the office of the town or city clerk a report on its  
309 evaluation. When the polling places have been designated pursuant to this section, the board of  
310 registrars shall post on the municipal website and at other such places as it may determine, a  
311 description of the polling places and shall notify voters by using an electronic means, to the  
312 extent available, such as via email or reverse 911 call.

313           SECTION 12. Notwithstanding section 29 of chapter 53 of the General Laws and  
314 sections 11, 11B, 12 and 13 of chapter 54 of the General Laws or any other general or special  
315 law to the contrary, for the primary election and general election, if the city or town clerk

316 determines in writing that there is a deficiency in the number of required election officers, then  
317 the appointing authority may appoint election officers without regard to political party  
318 membership, voter status, residence in the city or town or inclusion on a list filed by a political  
319 party committee pursuant to said sections 11B and 12 of said chapter 54. If the position of the  
320 warden, clerk or inspector, or the deputy of any such officer, if any, is vacant within the 3 weeks  
321 preceding the primary or general election, the city or town clerk may fill the vacancy by  
322 appointing a competent person willing to serve, without regard to political party membership,  
323 voter status, residence in the city or town or inclusion on a list filed by a political party  
324 committee pursuant to said sections 11B and 12 of said chapter 54.

325           SECTION 13. Notwithstanding sections 67 and 83 of chapter 54 of the General Laws or  
326 any other general or special law to the contrary, for the primary election and general election, the  
327 city or town clerk may eliminate the requirement that a voter provide their name or residence to  
328 an election officer at the ballot box and that the election officer mark the name off a voting list  
329 before the voter may deposit the ballot in the ballot box.

330           SECTION 14. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the state  
331 secretary shall implement a system to allow a qualified voter to request an early or absentee  
332 ballot on the state secretary's website, to be mailed to the qualified voter's home address or a  
333 different mailing address as designated by the voter. The system shall not require the voter's  
334 signature. The system shall apply to the November 3, 2020 general election, and, if feasible, to  
335 the September 1, 2020 state primaries, and shall in any event be operational not later than  
336 October 1, 2020.

337 SECTION 15. For an election held on or before December 31, 2020, any person taking  
338 precaution related to COVID-19 in response to a declared state of emergency or from guidance  
339 from a medical professional, local or state health official or any civil authority shall be deemed  
340 to be unable by reason of physical disability to cast their vote in person at a polling location.

341 SECTION 16. Notwithstanding sections 25B and 89 of chapter 54 of the General Laws or  
342 any other general or special law to the contrary, applications for early and absentee ballots for all  
343 elections held on or before December 31, 2020 shall be acceptable if they are signed or  
344 submitted electronically; provided, however, that any electronic signature shall be written in  
345 substantially the same manner as a handwritten signature.

346 SECTION 17. Notwithstanding any other general or special law to the contrary,  
347 subsection (c) of section 91B of chapter 54 of the General Laws shall apply to voters who have  
348 been instructed by a medical professional or a local or state health official to self-quarantine in  
349 their home beginning after noon on the seventh day before the any election held on or before  
350 December 31, 2020.

351 SECTION 18. Notwithstanding sections 26 and 28 of chapter 51 of the General Laws or  
352 any other general or special law to the contrary, the last day to register to vote for any election  
353 taking place on or before December 31, 2020 shall be 10 days before the date of such election;  
354 provided, however, that the board of registrars shall hold a registration session on that date not  
355 less than from 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. and from 7:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. The voting list to be used  
356 for any such election shall include all eligible voters registered as of that date.

357 SECTION 19. The state secretary shall promulgate emergency regulations for the  
358 administration and enforcement of this act including, after consulting with the commissioner of

359 the department of public health, regulations requiring public health safeguards at early voting  
360 sites and polling places, including required distancing of voters and election officers, frequent  
361 use of sanitizers, personal protective equipment and use of marking pens.

362 SECTION 20. Not later than July 15, 2020, the state secretary shall: (i) promulgate  
363 regulations for electronic poll books required by section 33I of chapter 54 of the General Laws;  
364 and (ii) certify 1 or more types of electronic poll books in time to be used in the 2020 state  
365 primary and the general elections, and all future elections, under said section 33I of said chapter  
366 54.

367 SECTION 21. The state secretary shall report to the house and senate committees on  
368 ways and means and the joint committee on election laws not later than July 1, 2021 on the costs  
369 to implement this act, including, but not limited to: (i) the number of ballot applications with  
370 postage guaranteed mailed to voters; (ii) the number of ballot applications with postage  
371 guaranteed returned requesting a ballot; (iii) the total number of ballots cast by mail; and (iv)  
372 total cost and amounts paid for using federal funds.

373 SECTION 22. The state secretary shall report to the house and senate committees on  
374 ways and means and the joint committee on election laws not later than 12 months after the  
375 enactment of this act on how the state secretary can make voting more accessible for voters with  
376 disabilities, specifically through online voting options.

377 SECTION 23. Section 109A of chapter 54 of the General Laws shall apply to ballots cast  
378 in the November 3, 2020 general election.

379 SECTION 24. The state secretary shall conduct a public awareness campaign to inform  
380 voters throughout the commonwealth of the provisions of this act, including, but not limited to,

381 measures to promote public awareness of expanded early voting options in the 2020 primary and  
382 general elections and the requirements and procedures for early voting by mail, including, but  
383 not limited to, information related to the ability of a voter who requests but does not return an  
384 early voting by mail ballot to vote in person on election day.