

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

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**Subject:** Absentee Voting for Uniformed and Overseas Citizens

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### Overview

This bill modifies certain procedures and requirements governing absentee voting by military and non-resident citizen voters. It permits transmission of absentee ballots electronically in certain circumstances, requires a study of ranked-voting in other states, and permits the secretary of state to adopt rules to facilitate absentee voting in emergency situations.

#### Section

- 1 Permanent Non-U.S. Residence.** Expands the law to allow certain individuals to vote for President and Vice President and members of Congress. Otherwise eligible voters may vote for these offices even though they have never resided within the territorial limits of the United States, if they have a parent who is eligible to vote in Minnesota.
- 2 Military and Non-Resident Absentee Voting.** Eliminates the requirement that a voter who does not have a valid passport or identification card include a signed certification, from either a military officer or other individual authorized to administer oaths, that the absentee voter has attested to the truthfulness of the absentee ballot application.

In addition to eliminating the oath requirement, this section of the bill permits an applicant to include a Minnesota driver's license or state identification card number instead of a military identification card number or passport number. If a voter does not have access to any of these documents, the voter may attest, under penalty of perjury, to the truthfulness of the application.

- 3 Ballot Submission.** Permits a voter to request that the absentee ballot, instructions, and

**Section**

certification of eligibility be sent electronically, as permitted under section 6 of the bill.

**4** **Return Envelope Design.** Requires the absentee ballot return envelope be formatted to reflect the changes in section 2 of the bill.

**5** **Replacement Ballots.** Requires that the county auditor only send one set of ballots to an absentee voter for any one election, except that a replacement ballot may be sent if a ballot has been spoiled or lost in transit, or if the absentee voter's mailing address has changed since the date on which the absentee voter application was submitted.

**6** **Electronic Ballot Transmission.** Establishes procedures for handling electronically transmitted absentee ballots.

**Subd. 1. Certification.** Permits the county auditor to transmit ballots, instructions, and an affidavit form and certification of voter eligibility to an absentee voter electronically.

**Subd. 2. Return of ballots.** Requires the absentee voter to return the ballots in a sealed envelope (not electronically). The county auditor must immediately verify the information provided. The ballot must be placed with the other absentee ballots in the precinct in which the voter resides.

**Subd. 3. Rejection.** A ballot must be rejected if the auditor cannot verify that the ballots were returned by the same person that submitted the absentee ballot application.

**7** **Write-In Absentee Ballot.** Permits an eligible voter who will be outside the United States during the 180 days prior to the general election to use the federal write-in absentee ballot for any federal, state, or local election.

**8** **Voter Eligibility Verification.** Removes a reference to the currently required oath from the list of items an election judge must verify before accepting an absentee ballot; this section of the bill conforms the verification process to the new requirement in section 2 of the bill.

**9** **Emergency Powers.** Permits the secretary of state to use emergency orders or special procedures to facilitate absentee voting in the event of a national or local emergency situation that makes substantial compliance with the existing procedures impossible or unreasonable. The secretary of state must adopt rules describing the emergency powers and the situations in which they must be exercised.