



SENATE BILL 724: Expand Access to Voter ID & Voting.

2021-2022 General Assembly

Committee:	House Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	November 17, 2021
Introduced by:	Sens. Newton, Daniel, Hise	Prepared by:	Jessica Sammons and Hillary Woodard
Analysis of:	Third Edition		Committee Co-counsel

OVERVIEW: Senate Bill 724 would do the following:

- *Authorize visually impaired voters to cast an absentee ballot online using a visually impaired portal maintained by the State Board of Elections.*
- *Allow eligible voters to register to vote and update voter registration information online.*
- *State the intent of the General Assembly to fund a program to identify and assist voters needing photo identification in order to vote in person.*

Part I – Online Voting Portal for Visually Impaired Voters:

CURRENT LAW: Any qualified voter in this State may cast an absentee ballot in a statewide primary, general, or special election on constitutional amendments, referenda or bond proposals. Any qualified voter of a county is also authorized to cast an absentee ballot in a primary or election conducted by the county board of elections.

BILL ANALYSIS: Section 1 would provide that a visually impaired voter may request to cast an absentee ballot through a visually impaired portal maintained by the State Board. A voter would indicate on an absentee ballot request form that he or she requests access to the portal. In doing so, the individual would certify that he or she is visually impaired and meets all other requirements to vote by absentee ballot. Upon receiving the request, the county board of elections would email the voter a link to access the portal.

For purposes of casting an absentee ballot using the visually impaired portal, the visually impaired voter and any witnesses would be authorized to electronically sign the application.

In order to be counted, ballots submitted using the visually impaired portal would be required to comply with the following:

- Be returned electronically to the county board of elections by 7:30 P.M. on the day of the election.
- Witnessed just as any other mail-in absentee ballot, except that a notary shall not be permitted unless remote notarization is otherwise allowed by State law.
- The signatures of the visually impaired voter and witnesses shall be submitted at the same time as the voted ballot.

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Part II – Online Voter Registration:

CURRENT LAW: Individuals applying for voter registration or updating voter registration information may submit an application by mail, fax, scan, or in person. Additionally, individuals may register to vote or update voter registration information at a North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office or by using the DMV's secure internet website. Certain public agencies are also required to offer voter registration services, such as public assistance agencies, military recruitment offices, or other public offices authorized to accept a voter registration application.

Generally, the deadline to register to vote is 25 days before a primary or election. However, if an individual has become qualified to register after the twenty-fifth day before a primary or election, that individual may apply to register on that primary or election day. Individuals may also register to vote or update the individual's name and address and cast a ballot via same-day registration at an early voting site during the "one-stop" early voting period.

BILL ANALYSIS: Section 2 would require the State Board and the DMV to jointly develop and maintain an online voter registration website to allow an individual who is eligible to register to vote or currently registered to vote and who possesses a valid NC drivers license or special identification card for nonoperators to do the following: (1) register to vote or (2) update his or her existing voter registration.

The DMV would be responsible for verifying the individual's identity, protecting and securing the data maintained in the online voter registration system, and maintaining the security of the voter registration system. The State Board would be required to forward any online voter registration applications to the appropriate county board of elections within five business days of the acceptance of the application in accordance with rules established by the State Board.

Part III – Establish a Program to Identify & Assist Voters Needing Photo ID:

BILL ANALYSIS: Section 3 would state the intent of the General Assembly to appropriate money to fund a program to identify individuals who need photo identification in order to vote in person. This program would be required to include a mobile component allowing for visits to individuals who are identified as needing photo identification in order to vote in person.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Effective when it becomes law.