House Bill 121

By: Representatives Hamilton of the 24th, Powell of the 32nd, Brockway of the 102nd, Fleming of the 121st, and Taylor of the 173rd

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 2 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to 2 primaries and elections generally, so as to require notice of write-in candidacy filings to 3 include an authorization by the candidate if such filings are not done by the candidate; to 4 eliminate references to municipal registrars; to revise certain terminology; to revise certain 5 forms of proof of citizenship; to provide for the dissemination of certain voter registration information; to provide for the updating of municipal maps to the board of registrars; to 6 7 provide for the transfer of voter registration to another county in certain circumstances; to provide for the provision of absentee ballots without additional request in certain 8 9 circumstances; to revise the information required on absentee ballot envelopes; to revise the 10 reporting requirements for a pilot project for electronic handling of absentee ballots; to clarify assistance in voting procedures; to regulate certain activities within and within close 11 12 proximity to polling places; to clarify the procedures for use of provisional ballots; to provide 13 for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

15 SECTION 1.

16 Chapter 2 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to primaries and

17 elections generally, is amended by revising subsection (a) of Code Section 21-2-133, relating

18 to giving notice of intent of write-in candidacy, filing of affidavit, limitations on candidacy,

19 and certification of candidates, as follows:

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20 "(a) No person elected on a write-in vote shall be eligible to hold office unless notice of

his or her intention of candidacy was filed and published no earlier than January 1 and no

later than the Tuesday after the first Monday in September prior to the election for county,

state, and federal elections; no later than seven days after the close of the qualifying period

for nonpartisan elections in the case of nonpartisan elections for state or county offices; no

later than seven days after the close of the municipal qualifying period for municipal

elections in the case of a general election; or no later than seven days after the close of the

special election qualifying period for a special election by the person to be a write-in candidate or by some other person or group of persons qualified to vote in the subject election, as follows:

- (1) In a state general or special election, notice shall be filed with the Secretary of State and published in a newspaper of general circulation in the state;
- 32 (2) In a general or special election of county officers, notice shall be filed with the superintendent of elections in the county in which he or she is to be a candidate and published in the official organ of the same county; or
- 35 (3) In a municipal general or special election, notice shall be filed with the superintendent and published in the official gazette of the municipality holding the election.
- In the event that such intention of candidacy is filed and published by a person or group of persons other than the candidate, such person or group of persons shall also file a written,
- 40 <u>notarized authorization by the candidate for such filing and publication.</u>"

41 SECTION 2.

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Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (c) of Code Section 21-2-212, relating to county registrars; appointment, certification, term of service, vacancies, compensation, and expenses of chief registrar, registrars, and other officers and employees; and budget estimates, as follows:

"(c) The governing authority of each municipality shall appoint registrars as necessary, and the appointments shall be entered on the minutes of such governing authority. The municipal governing authority shall designate one of the registrars as chief registrar. The chief registrar will serve as such during such registrar's term of office, and such designation shall likewise be entered on the minutes of such governing authority. Such registrars shall serve at the pleasure of the municipal governing authority, and compensation of the registrars shall be fixed by such governing authority. Any registrar shall have the right to resign at any time by submitting a resignation to such governing authority. In the event of any such removal or resignation of a registrar, such registrar's duties and authority as such shall terminate instantly. Successors to resigned registrars shall be appointed by the municipal governing authority. Each appointment or change in designation shall be entered on the minutes of such governing authority and certified by the governing authority. The municipal governing authority may furnish such employees and facilities as it deems necessary for the operation of the office and the affairs of the registrars Reserved."

SECTION 3.

61 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 21-2-214, relating to qualifications

- of registrars and deputy registrars, prohibited political activities, oath of office, privilege
- from arrest, and duties conducted in public, as follows:
- 64 "21-2-214.
- 65 (a) Members of the board of registrars shall be electors of the this state and the county in
- which they serve, and any deputy registrars shall be electors of the this state. All registrars
- shall be able to read, write, and speak the English language. Municipal registrars shall be
- 68 registered Georgia voters and shall be able to read, write, and speak the English language.
- Registrars and deputy registrars shall have never been convicted of a felony involving
- moral turpitude unless such person's civil rights have been restored and at least ten years
- have elapsed from the date of the completion of the sentence without a subsequent
- 72 conviction of another felony involving moral turpitude and shall never have been convicted
- of a crime involving fraud, and the appointing authority shall be authorized to investigate
- the applicant's criminal history before making such appointment.
- 75 (b) The office of a member of a county or municipal board of registrars, a deputy registrar,
- member of a county or municipal board of elections or county or municipal board of
- elections and registration, or a member of a joint county-municipal board of elections or
- joint county-municipal board of elections and registration shall be vacated immediately
- upon such officer's qualifying for any nomination or office to be voted for at a primary or
- 80 election or qualifying for any nomination or office or qualifying to have such officer's
- name placed on any primary or election ballot pursuant to Code Sections 21-2-132
- and 21-2-153 or giving notice of such officer's intention of write-in candidacy; provided,
- however, that this Code section shall not apply to a chief deputy registrar who is also an
- 84 elected public officer and who seeks to qualify for reelection to the public office such chief
- 85 deputy registrar is presently holding. Nothing contained in this Code section shall cause
- the office of a member of a county or municipal board of registrars, deputy registrar,
- 87 member of a county or municipal board of elections or county or municipal board of
- 88 elections and registration, or a member of a joint county-municipal board of elections or
- joint county-municipal board of elections and registration to be vacated upon qualifying
- 90 for or having such officer's name placed on the ballot or holding office in a political party
- or body or serving as a presidential elector.
- 92 (c) No member of a county or municipal board of registrars, deputy registrar, member of
- a county or municipal board of elections or county or municipal board of elections and
- 94 registration, or a member of a joint county-municipal board of elections or joint
- ounty-municipal board of elections and registration, while conducting the duties of such
- 96 person's office, shall engage in any political activity on behalf of a candidate, political party

or body, or question, including, but not limited to, distributing campaign literature,

- 98 engaging in any communication that advocates or criticizes a particular candidate,
- officeholder, or political party or body, and wearing badges, buttons, or clothing with
- partisan messages.
- 101 (d) Before entering upon the duties of office, each registrar and deputy registrar shall take
- the following oath before some officer authorized to administer oaths under the laws of this
- state:
- 104 'I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and impartially discharge, to the best of my
- ability, the duties imposed upon me by law as (deputy) registrar.'
- 106 (e) Registrars, deputy registrars, election superintendents, and poll officers shall be
- privileged from arrest upon days of primaries and elections, except for fraudulent
- misconduct of duty, felony, larceny, or breach of the peace.
- (f) The registrars shall conduct their duties in public, and all hearings on the qualifications
- of electors shall be conducted in public."

111 SECTION 4.

- 112 Said chapter is further amended by revising paragraph (2) of subsection (g) of Code
- 113 Section 21-2-216, relating to qualifications of electors generally, reregistration of electors
- purged from list, eligibility of nonresidents who vote in presidential elections, retention of
- qualification for standing as elector, evidence of citizenship, and check of convicted felons
- and deceased persons databases, as follows:
- 117 "(2) Satisfactory evidence of citizenship shall include any of the following:
- (A) The number of the applicant's Georgia driver's license or identification card issued
- by the Department of Driver Services if the applicant has provided satisfactory
- evidence of United States citizenship to the Department of Driver Services or a legible
- photocopy of the applicant's driver's license or identification card issued by an
- equivalent government agency of another state if the agency indicates on the driver's
- license or identification card that the applicant has provided satisfactory evidence of
- 124 United States citizenship to the agency;
- (B) A legible photocopy of the applicant's birth certificate that verifies citizenship to
- the satisfaction of the board of registrars;
- 127 (C) A legible photocopy of pertinent pages of the applicant's United States passport
- identifying the applicant and the applicant's passport number or presentation to the
- board of registrars of the applicant's United States passport;
- 130 (D) A presentation to the board of registrars of the applicant's United States
- naturalization documents or the alien registration number from the applicant's
- naturalization documents. If only the applicant's alien registration number is provided,

the applicant shall not be found eligible to vote until the applicant's alien registration number is verified with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services by the board of registrars;

- (E) Other documents or methods of proof that are established pursuant to the federal Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (P. L. 99-603);
- (F) The A legible photocopy of the applicant's Bureau of Indian Affairs card number, tribal treaty card number, or tribal enrollment number card that verifies citizenship to the satisfaction of the board of registrars; and
 - (G) For residents of this state who are United States citizens but are not in possession of any of the documents or methods of proof enumerated under subparagraphs (A) through (F) of this paragraph, other documents or methods of proof for establishing evidence of United States citizenship which shall be promulgated by rule and regulation of the State Election Board."

146 **SECTION 5.**

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Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (e) of Code Section 21-2-224, relating to registration deadlines, restrictions on voting in primaries, official list of electors, and voting procedure when portion of county changed from one county to another, as follows: "(e) The county board of registrars shall deliver to the chief registrar of the municipality, upon a basis mutually agreed upon between the county board of registrars and the governing authority of the municipality, a copy of the list of electors for the municipality for the primary or election. Such list shall be delivered not earlier than the fifth Monday prior to a primary or election and not later than 21 days prior to such primary or election for the purpose of permitting the chief registrar of the municipality to check the accuracy of the list. The municipal registrar municipality shall, upon receipt of the county registration list, or as soon as practicable thereafter but in no event later than five days prior to such primary or election, review such list and identify in writing to the county board of registrars any names on the electors list of persons who are not qualified to vote at such primary or election, stating the reason for disqualification. The county board of registrars shall challenge the persons identified in accordance with Code Section 21-2-228. In addition, the county board of registrars shall provide a list of inactive electors for the municipality. The municipal registrar municipality shall certify such lists and file with the city clerk a copy showing the names of electors entitled to vote at such primary or election."

Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (b) of Code Section 21-2-225, relating

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to confidentiality of original registration applications, limitations on registration data available for public inspection, and data made available by Secretary of State, as follows: "(b) Except as provided in Code Section 21-2-225.1, all data collected and maintained on electors whose names appear on the list of electors maintained by the Secretary of State pursuant to this article shall be available for public inspection with the exception of bank statements submitted pursuant to subsection (c) of Code Section 21-2-220 and subsection (c) of Code Section 21-2-417, the month and day of birth, the social security numbers, e-mail addresses, and driver's license numbers of the electors, and the locations at which the electors applied to register to vote, which shall remain confidential and shall be used only for voter registration purposes; provided, however, that any and all information relating to the dates of birth, social security numbers, and driver's license numbers of electors may be made available to other agencies of this state, to agencies of other states and territories of the United States, and to agencies of the federal government if the agency is authorized to maintain such information and the information is used only to identify the elector on the receiving agency's data base and is not disseminated further and remains confidential. Information regarding an elector's year of birth shall be available for public inspection."

185 SECTION 7.

Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (c) of Code Section 21-2-226, relating to duties of county board in determining eligibility of voters, maps of municipal boundaries, notice of ineligibility, issuance of registration cards, and reimbursement for postage cost, as follows:

"(c) It shall be the duty of each incorporated municipality located wholly or partially within the boundaries of a county to provide a detailed map showing the municipal boundaries, municipal precinct boundaries, and voting district boundaries to the county board of registrars no later than January 1, 1995, and within 15 days after the preclearance of any changes in such municipal boundaries, precinct boundaries, or voting district boundaries pursuant to Section 5 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. Section 1973c), as amended any subsequent changes to such boundaries. Upon receiving any changes in municipal boundaries, the county board of registrars shall provide to the municipal registrar municipality a list of all voters affected by such changes with the street addresses of such electors for the purpose of verifying the changes with the municipality. Upon receiving the list of electors affected by changes in municipal boundaries, the

municipal registrar municipality shall immediately review the information provided by the county registrars and advise the county registrars of any discrepancies."

203 SECTION 8.

Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (d) of Code Section 21-2-233, relating to comparison of change of address information supplied by United States Postal Service with electors list, removal from list of electors, and notice to electors, as follows:

"(d) Whenever an elector's name is removed from the list of electors by the county registrars because the elector has furnished in writing to the registrar a residence address that is located outside of the State of Georgia, the registrars shall notify the elector in writing at the elector's new address that the elector's name is being deleted from the list of electors. Whenever an elector's registration is transferred by the county registrars to another county in this state because the elector has furnished in writing to the registrar a residence address that is located in this state outside of the elector's present county of registration in accordance with subsection (c) of this Code section, the registrars of the county of the elector's former residence shall notify the elector in writing at the elector's new address that the elector's registration is being transferred to the new address. The registrars of the county of the elector's new address shall provide the elector with a new registration precinct card pursuant to Code Section 21-2-226."

SECTION 9.

Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (d) of Code Section 21-2-234, relating to electors who have failed to vote and with whom there has been no contact in three years, confirmation notice requirements and procedure, and time for completion of list maintenance activities, as follows:

"(d) If the elector returns the card and shows that he or she has changed residence to a place outside of the State of Georgia, the elector's name shall be removed from the appropriate list of electors. If the elector confirms the change of address to an address outside of the boundaries of the county or municipality in which the elector is currently registered, the elector's name shall be removed from the appropriate list of electors and information shall be sent to the elector explaining how the elector can continue to be eligible to vote but still within the State of Georgia, the elector's registration shall be transferred to the new county or municipality. The Secretary of State or the registrars shall forward the confirmation card to the registrars of the county in which the elector's new address is located, and the registrars of the county of the new address shall update the voter registration list to reflect the change of address."

235 **SECTION 10.**

236 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 21-2-380.1, relating to

- 237 appointment of absentee ballot clerk, as follows:
- 238 "21-2-380.1.

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- The governing authority of a municipality shall appoint an absentee ballot clerk who may
- be the county registrar, municipal registrar, or any other designated official and who shall
- 241 perform the duties set forth in this article."

242 **SECTION 11.**

243 Said chapter is further amended by revising subparagraph (a)(1)(G) of Code

244 Section 21-2-381, relating to making of application for absentee ballot, determination of

eligibility by ballot clerk, furnishing of applications to colleges and universities, and persons

246 entitled to make application, as follows:

"(G) Any elector meeting criteria of advanced age or disability specified by rule or regulation of the State Election Board or any elector who is entitled to vote by absentee ballot under the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, 42 U.S.C. Section 1973ff, et seq., as amended, may request in writing on one application a ballot for a presidential preference primary held pursuant to Article 5 of this chapter and for a primary as well as for any runoffs resulting therefrom and for the election for which such primary shall nominate candidates as well as any runoffs resulting therefrom. If not so requested by such person, a separate and distinct application shall be required for each primary, run-off primary, election, and run-off election. Except as otherwise provided in this subparagraph, a separate and distinct application for an absentee ballot shall always be required for the presidential preference primary held pursuant to Article 5 of this chapter and for any special election or special primary."

259 **SECTION 12.**

Said chapter is further amended by revising paragraph (1) of subsection (c) of Code Section 21-2-384, relating to preparation and delivery of supplies, mailing of ballots, oath

of absentee electors and persons assisting absentee electors, master list of ballots sent,

263 challenges, and electronic transmission of ballots, as follows:

"(c)(1) The oaths referred to in subsection (b) of this Code section shall be insubstantially the following form:

I, the undersigned, do swear (or affirm) that I am a citizen of the United States and of

267 the State of Georgia; that my residence address is _____ County, Georgia, for

voting purposes; that I possess the qualifications of an elector required by the laws of

269 the State of Georgia; that I am entitled to vote in the precinct containing my residence

270	in the primary or election in which this ballot is to be cast; that I am eligible to vote by
271	absentee ballot; that I have not marked or mailed any other absentee ballot, nor will I
272	mark or mail another absentee ballot for voting in such primary or election; nor shall
273	I vote therein in person; and that I have read and understand the instructions
274	accompanying this ballot; and that I have carefully complied with such instructions in
275	completing this ballot. I understand that the offer or acceptance of money or any other
276	object of value to vote for any particular candidate, list of candidates, issue, or list of
277	issues included in this election constitutes an act of voter fraud and is a felony under
278	Georgia law.
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280	Elector's Residence
281	Address for Voting Purposes
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283	Month and Day Year of
284	Elector's Birth
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286	Signature or Mark of Elector
287	Oath of Person Assisting Elector (if any):
288	I, the undersigned, do swear (or affirm) that I assisted the above-named elector in
289	marking such elector's absentee ballot as such elector personally communicated such
290	elector's preference to me; and that such elector is entitled to receive assistance in
291	voting under provisions of subsection (a) of Code Section 21-2-409.
292	This, the,
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294	Signature of Person Assisting
295	Elector – Relationship
296	Reason for assistance (Check appropriate square):
297	() Elector is unable to read the English language.
298	() Elector requires assistance due to physical disability.
299	The forms upon which such oaths are printed shall contain the following information:
300	Georgia law provides, in subsection (b) of Code Section 21-2-409, that no person shall
301	assist more than ten electors in any primary, election, or runoff in which there is no
302	federal candidate on the ballot.

Georgia law further provides that any person who knowingly falsifies information so as to vote illegally by absentee ballot or who illegally gives or receives assistance in voting, as specified in Code Section 21-2-568 or 21-2-573, shall be guilty of a felony."

306 **SECTION 13.**

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Said chapter is further amended by revising subsections (e) and (f) of Code Section 21-2-387, relating to pilot program for electronic handling of absentee ballots, requirements for pilot program, reporting, and termination of pilot program, as follows:

- "(e) The Secretary of State shall review the results of the pilot program and shall provide the members of the General Assembly with a comprehensive report no later than 90 days following the primary or general election cycle in which such pilot program is used on the effectiveness of such pilot program with any recommendations for its continued use and any needed changes in such program for future primaries and elections.
- 315 (f) The pilot program shall be used in the first primary or general election cycle following:
- 316 (1) The inclusion in the Appropriations Act of a specific line item appropriation for 317 funding of such pilot program or a determination by the Secretary of State that there is 318 adequate funding through public or private funds, or a combination of public and private 319 funds, to conduct the pilot program; provided, however, that no funds shall be accepted 320 from registered political parties or political bodies for this purpose; and
- (2) Certification by the Secretary of State that such pilot program is feasible and can be
 implemented for such primary or general election."

323 **SECTION 14.**

- Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (b) of Code Section 21-2-409, relating to assisting electors who cannot read English or who have disabilities, as follows:
- 326 "(b)(1) In elections in which there is a federal candidate on the ballot, any elector who
 327 is entitled to receive assistance in voting under this Code section shall be permitted by
 328 the managers to select any person of the elector's choice except such elector's employer
 329 or agent of that employer or officer or agent of such elector's union to enter the voting
 330 compartment or booth with him or her to assist in voting, such assistance to be rendered
 331 inside the voting compartment or booth.
- 332 (2) In all other elections, any elector who is entitled to receive assistance in voting under 333 this Code section shall be permitted by the managers to select:
- 334 (A) Any elector, except a poll officer or poll watcher, who is a resident of the precinct 335 in which the elector requiring assistance is attempting to vote; or
- 336 (B) The mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, spouse, son, daughter, niece, nephew, grandchild, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law,

brother-in-law, sister-in-law, or attendant care provider of the elector entitled to receive

assistance to enter the voting compartment or booth with him or her to assist in voting, such assistance to be rendered inside the voting compartment or booth. No person shall assist, under this paragraph, more than ten such electors in any primary, election, or runoff

under this paragraph, more than ten such electors in any primary, election, or runoff covered by this paragraph. No person whose name appears on the ballot as a candidate at a particular election nor the mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, spouse, son, daughter, niece, nephew, grandchild, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law of that candidate shall offer assistance during that particular election under the provisions of this Code section paragraph to any voter who is not related to such candidate. For the purposes of this paragraph, 'related to such candidate' shall mean the candidate's mother, father,

grandparent, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, spouse, son, daughter, niece, nephew, grandchild,

son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, or

352 sister-in-law."

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SECTION 15.

354 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsections (a) and (c) of Code

355 Section 21-2-414, relating to restrictions on campaign activities and public opinion polling

356 within the vicinity of a polling place, cellular phone use prohibited, prohibition of candidates

357 from entering certain polling places, and penalty, as follows:

358 "(a) No person shall solicit votes in any manner or by any means or method, nor shall any

person distribute or display any campaign literature, newspaper, booklet, pamphlet, card,

sign, paraphernalia, or any other written or printed matter of any kind, nor shall any person

solicit signatures for any petition or conduct any exit poll or public opinion poll with

voters, nor shall any person establish or set up any voter information or assistance tables,

booths, or stations on any day in which ballots are being cast:

(1) Within 150 feet of the outer edge of any building within which a polling place is

365 established;

(2) Within any polling place; or

(3) Within 25 feet of any voter standing in line to vote at any polling place.

368 These restrictions shall not apply to conduct occurring in private offices or areas which

cannot be seen or heard by such electors."

370 "(c) Reserved Except for credentialed poll watchers, poll workers, and law enforcement

officers, poll officers may manage the number of persons allowed in the polling place to

372 prevent confusion, congestion, and inconvenience to voters."

SECTION 16.

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Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (a) of Code Section 21-2-418, relating to provisional ballots, as follows:

"(a) If a person presents himself or herself at a polling place, absentee polling place, or registration office <u>in his or her county of residence in this state</u> for the purpose of casting a ballot in a primary or election <u>believing stating a good faith belief</u> that he or she has timely registered to vote in <u>that county for</u> such primary or election and the person's name does not appear on the list of registered electors, the person shall be entitled to cast a provisional ballot <u>in his or her county of residence in this state</u> as provided in this Code section."

383 **SECTION 17.**

Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (c) of Code Section 21-2-500, relating to delivery of voting materials, presentation to grand jury in certain cases, preservation and destruction, and destruction of unused ballots, as follows:

"(c) Immediately upon completing the returns required by this article, the municipal superintendent shall deliver in sealed containers to the city clerk the used and void ballots and the stubs of all ballots used; one copy of the oaths of poll officers; and one copy of each numbered list of voters, tally paper, voting machine paper proof sheet, and return sheet involved in the primary or election. In addition, the municipal superintendent shall deliver copies of the voting machine ballot labels, computer chips containing ballot tabulation programs, copies of computer records of ballot design, and similar items or an electronic record of the program by which votes are to be recorded or tabulated, which is captured prior to the election, and which is stored on some alternative medium such as a CD-ROM or floppy disk simultaneously with the programming of the PROM or other memory storage device. Such ballots and other documents shall be preserved under seal in the office of the city clerk for at least 24 months; and then they may be destroyed unless otherwise provided by order of the mayor and council if a contest has been filed or by court order, provided that the electors list, voter's certificates, and duplicate oaths of assisted electors shall be immediately returned by the superintendent to the county or municipal registrar as appropriate."

403 **SECTION 18.**

404 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.