MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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122nd MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2005

Legislative Document

No. 1436

H.P. 1000

House of Representatives, March 22, 2005

An Act To Encourage a Vote-by-Mail System in Maine

Reference to the Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

Millicent M. Mac Farland
MILLICENT M. Mac FARLAND
Clerk

Presented by Representative GLYNN of South Portland. Cosponsored by President EDMONDS of Cumberland.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 21-A MRSA §698, sub-§2-A, as amended by PL 2003, c. 447, §23, is further amended to read:

2-A. Used ballots placed in tamper-proof containers. The election clerks shall place the used state ballots, including spoiled ballots, defective ballots, void ballots, used absentee ballots, used absentee envelopes with-the-applicable-applications attached, envelopes containing challenge certificates, and the official tally tape from the electronic tabulating system in one or more tamper-proof ballot containers. The ballot containers must be furnished by the Secretary of State. Ballots and election materials for municipal elections conducted at the same time as a state election must be sealed separately from state ballots and other state election materials. If municipalities wish to use tamper-proof containers to seal municipal election materials, they must obtain the containers and locks at their own expense.

If a state-supplied tamper-proof container or lock becomes
defective, lost or destroyed, the clerk must apply in writing to
the Secretary of State for another. The Secretary of State shall

24 supply or approve a replacement at the expense of the municipality.

A tamper-proof ballot container must be locked and sealed with a numbered seal before leaving the precinct. The lock and seal numbers must correlate with a certificate identifying the person sealing the container and the time of the sealing. The locks, seals and identifying certificates must be furnished by the Secretary of State.

- A. Transfer and resealing of the ballots to other containers for permanent storage must be done 60 or more days following the election. The municipal clerk shall make the transfer in the presence of one or more witnesses. The containers must be securely sealed.
- Sec. 2. 21-A MRSA §698, sub-§5, as amended by PL 2003, c. 584, §10, is further amended to read:
 - 5. Two or more voting districts. In municipalities having 2 or more voting districts where absentee ballots are counted at a place other than the voting district, all absentee ballots, applications and envelopes may be packed together in the same container, which shall must then be sealed publicly.
- A. The portions of subsections 2-A and 2-B that deal with absentee ballots do not apply to municipalities with 2 or

2	separately.
4	Sec. 3. 21-A MRSA §753-A, as amended by PL 2003, c. 447, §§28 and 29, is repealed.
6	Sec. 4. 21-A MRSA §753-B, as amended by PL 2003, c. 447, §§30
8	and 31, is further amended to read:
10	§753-B. Procedure for issuing absentee ballot
12	1. Mail delivery; 30 days prior to election. Upen-receipt of-an-application,-written-request-or-telephone-application-for
14	an-absentee-ballot-that-is-accepted-pursuant-te-section-753-A,
16	the <u>The</u> clerk shall immediately issue an absentee ballot and return envelope by mail er-in-person-to-the-applicant-or-to-the
10	immediatefamily-memberortoa3rdpersondesignatedina
18	writtenapplicationorrequestmadebythevoter to each
	registered voter 30 days prior to an election. The clerk shall
20	verify the address of each registered voter prior to mailing out
2.2	absentee ballots as prescribed by rule. The clerk shall type or
22	write in ink the name and the residence address of the voter in
24	the designated section of the return envelope. The Secretary of State shall provide a return envelope that moves free of postage
24	under federal law. A voter who registers to vote after ballots
26	have been mailed may request a ballot be sent by mail or may
	receive a ballot in person at the municipal clerk's office. The
28	Secretary of State shall adopt rules to implement this
	subsection. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are
30	routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375,
0.0	subchapter 2-A.
32	1.3. Demont for bellet bellet out 1.11.
34	1-A. Request for ballot; ballot not delivered by mail. A
34	person who is a registered voter but did not receive an absentee ballot and return envelope as required under this section or is a
36	uniformed service voter or an overseas voter may:
	was a surface of the
38	A. Make a written request by mail, in person or facsimile.
	Such a request must include:
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	(1) The voter's name and birth date;
42	(2)
44	(2) The voter's residence address or other address
44	sufficient to identify the voter; and
46	(3) The signature of the voter; or
48	B. Make a telephone request. The clerk shall ask the voter
	for the information required in paragraph A, with the
50	exception of the voter's signature. The clerk shall verify

that it is the voter who is requesting the ballot by confirming the voter's residence address and birth date with the information in the voter's record.

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2.--Restrictions - on - issuing - ballet. --- The - elerk - may - net deliver - an - absentee - ballet - te - any - 3rd - person - who - is - a - eandidate er - a - member - of - a - candidate's - immediate - family - - The - elerk - may - net deliver - to - an - immediate - family - member - or - to - a - 3rd - person - any absentee - ballet - requested - by - telephone - - The - clerk - may - not - issue more - than - 5 - absentee - ballets - to - any - 3rd - person - designated - in applications - or - written - requests - at - any - time -

 3.--Return-of-ballot-by-3rd-person.--A-3rd-person-shall, unless-good-cause-is-shown,--return-an-absentee-ballot-to-the elerk's-office-within-2-business-days-of-the-date-that-ballot-was provided-to-the-3rd-person-or-by-the-close-of-the-polis-on election-day,-whichever-is-earlier---The-elerk-shall-inform-the 3rd-person-of-the-deadline-for-the-return-of-the-ballot.

4. Duplicate ballots. The clerk may issue a 2nd state absentee ballot to an-applicant a voter if the applicant voter requests one by an acceptable method outlined in this subchapter and the voter states good cause, including, but not limited to, loss of, spoiling of or damage to the first absentee ballot.

A---The-applicant-states-geed-cause,-including,-but-net limited-to,-less-of,-spoiling-ef-or-damage-to-the-first absentee-ballet;-or

B.--An-absentee-ballot-fer-the-applicant-that-was-furnished to-a-designated-3rd-person-was-not-returned-to-the-elerk's effice-within-the-time-limit-provided-in-subsection-3r--If-a ballot-fer-an-applicant-is-not-returned-to-the-elerk-within that-time-limit,-the-clerk-shall-mail-or-hand-deliver-a ballot-to-that-applicant-and-may-not-issue-another-ballot-to the-applicant-except-fer-good-cause-as-provided-in-this subsection--This-paragraph-does-not-affect-the-deadline-fer delivery-of-absentee-ballots-under-section-755.

The clerk may also issue a 2nd state absentee ballot to a voter from whom the clerk has received a return envelope apparently containing a state absentee ballot when the State has provided the clerk with replacement ballots to reflect the removal of a candidate's name or the addition of a new candidate's name or the correction of an error. When a 2nd state absentee ballot is issued to a voter under this section, the clerk must write the words "second ballot issued" on the return envelope.

Alternate method of balloting by residents of certain licensed facilities. The municipal clerk shall designate one or more times during the 30-day period prior to an election during which the municipal clerk shall be present in each licensed nursing home subject to the provisions of Title 22, chapter 405; licensed residential care facility subject to the provisions of Title 22, chapter 1664; and assisted housing program subject to the provisions of Title 22, chapter 1664, in the municipality for the purpose of conducting absentee voting by residents of these The licensed residential care facilities referred to facilities. in this subsection are those that are licensed as Level II The clerk shall designate which areas in these facilities. facilities constitute the voting place, the voting booth and the quardrail enclosure. Sections 681 and 682 apply to voting in these facilities within the areas designated by the clerk.

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Clerk to list. The clerk shall keep an alphabetical list, by district, of the persons who requested-or were furnished absentee ballots, including the persons who voted in the presence of the clerk under subsection 8 and-the-persons-whose-ballets were-issued-to-a-3rd-person-under-subsection-1. The clerk shall maintain a copy of the lists required under this subsection for a period of 2 years as a public record.

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The list of absentee voters must include each voter's name, residence address, voting district and affiliation; the date and manner by which the ballot was requested, issued and received; a notation of whether the application -- and -- the ballot were was accepted or rejected; and a place for the registrar to certify the voter registration status of the absentee voters. The clerk must also indicate on the list when the absentee voter is a uniformed service voter or overseas voter.

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В. The clerk shall submit this list of absentee voters to the registrar for certification of the registration status and, when applicable, the enrollment status of the voters. The registrar shall certify the list either before or as soon as possible after the ballot is issued to the voter. The certifications must be completed before the absentee ballots may be processed and cast on election day.

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G---The-elerk-shall-also-keep-a--list-of--the-3rd-persons designated--in--applications--or--written--requests--to--whom absentee-ballots-are-sent-er-delivered-under-subsection-1 and-of-the-number-of-absentee-ballots-sent-or-delivered-to them.--This-list-of-3rd-person-ballot-carriers-must-include telephone-numbers-for-contacting-the-3rd-persons.

D. Within 20 days after each election, the clerk shall send a report to the Secretary of State stating the total number of absentee ballots issued to absentee voters in the municipality for that election. The report must further identify the number of ballots that were issued to uniformed service voters and overseas voters, respectively. For each category of absentee voters, the report must include the number of ballots that were returned by the voters and were processed and cast in the election.

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- 7. Registration verified. If the applicant voter is registered and enrolled when necessary, the ballot must be sent to the applicant voter. If the applicant voter has registered and enrolled when necessary under section 155 and will attain 18 years of age on or before the date of the election, the registrar or clerk shall se-certify-on-the-application send that person a ballot and return envelope in accordance with subsection 1. If net,-the-registrar-or-clerk-shall-write-"not-registered"-or-"net enrelled"-on-the-face-of-the-application-and-sign-the-registrar's er-clerk's-name.--Whenever-an-application-for-an-absentee-ballot is-denied,--the-municipal-olerk-shall-immediately--netify--the applicant-in-writing-of-the-reason-for-the-denial-
- 24 Absentee voting in presence of clerk. A person who wishes to vote by absentee ballot may, --without-completing-an application, vote by absentee ballot in the presence of the 26 clerk. The method of voting is otherwise as prescribed in this 28 article. After the person has voted, the clerk shall sign the affidavit on the return envelope as a witness, indicate on the 30 envelope that the voter voted in the presence of a clerk and ensure that the affidavit on the return envelope is properly completed by the voter. For the -45-30 days preceding an 32 election, during the hours when the clerk's office is open and may be conducting absentee voting, the display or distribution of 34 any advertising material intended to influence a voter's decision regarding a candidate or ballot issue is prohibited within the 36 clerk's office and on public property within 250 feet of the entrance to the clerk's office. 38
- This subsection does not apply to the display or distribution of any campaign advertising material on private property that is within 250 feet of the entrance to the clerk's office.
- This subsection does not apply to campaign advertising material on automobiles traveling to and from the municipal office or parked on municipal property while the occupants are visiting the municipal office to conduct municipal business. It does not prohibit a person who is at the municipal office for the purpose of conducting municipal business or for absentee voting from

wearing a campaign button when the longest dimension of the button does not exceed 3 inches.

Sec. 5. 21-A MRSA §754-A, as amended by PL 1999, c. 645, §7, is further amended to read:

§754-A. Method of voting

Except as provided in section 753-B, subsection 8, the method of voting by absentee ballot is as follows.

- 12 1. Ballot delivered to voter. When a voter <code>@f-an-immediate family-member--ef-a-veter</code> obtains a ballot from the clerk in person or by mail and returns that ballot to the clerk in person or by mail and receives no assistance in marking the ballot, the following procedures apply.
 - A. The voter shall mark that ballot according to section 691 or 692 so that it is impossible for anyone present at the time to see how the voter voted.
 - B. While the voter is marking the ballot, there may be no communication between the voter and any other individual as to the person or question for which the voter is to vote.
 - C. After the voter has completed marking the ballot, the voter shall then seal the ballot in its return envelope and complete the affidavit on the envelope. No notary or witness certification is required.
 - D. The voter or an immediate family member of the voter shall then mail or deliver in person the sealed envelope containing the voted ballot to the clerk of the municipality of which the voter is a resident. The-voter-shall-send-a completed-voter-registration or absentee ballot-application; if-necessary,-in-a-separate-envelope.
 - E. If an immediate family member of the voter returns an absentee ballot that was requested by the voter er-another immediate-family-member-of-the-voter, in writing or in person, the clerk shall accept the ballot. The clerk shall have the immediate family member who returned the ballot sign the application or written request and shall indicate that the ballot was returned by that person.
 - 2.--Ballet-delivered-by-3rd-person-or-returned-by-3rd
 person---When-a-ballot-is-delivered-to-the-voter-by-a-person
 other-than-the-clerk-or-an-immediate-family-member-of-the-voter
 or-is-returned-to-the-clerk-by-a-person-other-than-the-voter,-the

elerk-or-an-immediate-family-member-of-the-veter-and-the-veter 2 receives -- no -- assistance -- in - marking - the -- ballot, -- the -- fellowing precedures-apply. A---The--voter-must-mark-the-ballot-in-the-presence-of-the 6 fellowing-witness-or-witnesses: -- One -notary -public, -elerk-of a-municipality-or-clerk-of-courts-or-2-other-individuals. 8 The-voter, --before-marking-the-ballet, -must--show-it--to-the witness-or-witnesses-who-must-examine-it-to-be-certain-it-is 10 unmarked. 12 B. - - While - the -voter - is - marking - the -ballot, - there - may -be - no eemmunication-between-the-voter-and-any-other-individual-as 14 to-the-person-or-question-for-which-the-voter-is-to-vote. 16 C.--The-voter-must-mark-the-ballet-according-to-section-691 or-692-so-that-it-is-impossible-for-anyone-present-at-the 18 time-to-see-how-the-voter-voted.-The-voter-must-then-seal the-ballot-in-its-return-envelope-and-complete-the-affidavit 20 on-the-envelope-in-the-presence-of-the-witness-or-witnesses, who-shall-sign-the-witness-certification-22 D. - The voter must then complete the address on the envelope and-mail-or-deliver-it-personally-or-by-the-3rd-person-who 24 was--designated--in--the--application--to--the--clerk--ef--the 26 municipality-of--which-the--votor-is--a-resident----The--voter must-send-a-completed-voter-registration-or-absentee-ballet application,-if-necessary,-in-a-separate-envelope. 28 3. Assistance in reading or marking ballot. A voter who is 30 unable to read or mark the ballot because of the voter's physical 32 disability, illiteracy or religious faith must vote according to the procedures in this subsection instead of the procedures in subsection 1 er-2. 34 A voter who needs assistance may request another person, 36 other than the voter's employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter's union, to assist the voter 38 in reading or marking the ballot. 40 The voter or the aide must mark the ballot in the presence of one of the following witnesses: Notary public, 42 clerk of a municipality, clerk of courts or individual. 44 The voter or the aide, before marking the ballot, must 46 show it to the witness who must examine it to be certain it

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is unmarked.

D. While the voter or the aide is marking the ballot, there may be no communication between the voter and any individual, other than the aide who must mark the ballot as the voter indicates, as to the person or question for which the voter is to vote.

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The voter or the aide must mark the ballot according to section 691 or 692 so that it is impossible for anyone else present to see how the voter voted, then seal the ballot in its return envelope. The voter, or the aide at the voter's shall complete and sign the affidavit in request, witness, who shall sign the presence οf the aide must complete and sign certification. The certification for aides on the outside of the envelope.

F. The voter or the aide must then complete the address on the envelope and mail or deliver it personally er-by-the-3rd person-who-was-designated-in-the-application to the clerk of the municipality of which the voter is a resident. The voter must send a completed voter registration er-absentee

ballet-application,-if-necessary, in a separate envelope.

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Sec. 6. 21-A MRSA §756, as amended by PL 2003, c. 447, §§32 and 33, is further amended to read:

§756. Procedure on receipt

- When the clerk receives a return envelope apparently containing an absentee ballot, -he- the clerk shall observe the following procedures.
- 1. Time of receipt noted. -He- The clerk shall note the date and time of delivery on each return envelope. On request, he- the clerk shall give the person who delivers the ballot a receipt, stating the exact time of delivery.

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- 2. Clerk to examine affidavit. He-shall--eempare--the signature-of--the-voter-on--the-application,-where--required,-with that-on--the--dorresponding--return-envelope. He- The clerk shall examine the affidavit on the return envelope. If--the-signatures appear-te-have-been-made-by--the-same-person and if the affidavit is properly completed, -he- the clerk shall write "OK" and his the clerk's initials on the return envelope. Otherwise,--he shall-note-any-discrepancy-on-the-return-envelope.
- The clerk may not open any return envelope.
- A---If-the-signatures-do-not-appear--to-have-been-made-by-the same-person--but-this--discrepancy-is-apparently-the-result

of--the-voter's-having-properly-obtained-assistance-under either--section--753-A,--subsection5,---or--section--754-A, subsection--3,--or--both,--then--the--elerk--shall--note--the discrepancy--on-the--return-envelope,--but--shall--also--write "OK"-and-the-elerk's-initials-on-the-return-envelope,

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3.---Application--attached.---The--elerk--shall--attach--each application,-where-required,--to-the-corresponding-envelope.--He-shall-not-open-any-return-envelope.

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Envelopes and lists delivered. On election day, clerk shall deliver or have delivered the return envelopes prescribed by section 752, subsection 3,-with-the-applications, when--required,--attached and a copy of the list required by section 753-B, subsection 6, to the warden of the voting district in which the voter is registered, except in those municipalities where the clerk or the clerk's designee processes the absentee ballots centrally. In those municipalities where the absentee ballots are processed centrally, the clerk shall deliver or have delivered the materials described in this subsection to the person authorized by the clerk to process absentee ballots at the designated central location. After processing the absentee ballots, the warden or the clerk shall attach the copy of the list of absentee voters to the incoming voting list and seal it as provided in section 698.

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Procedure when duplicate envelopes received from same If more than one return envelope is received from the same voter who was authorized to receive a 2nd state absentee ballot pursuant to section 753-B, then the clerk or warden shall process and count the ballot from the envelope marked "second ballot issued" or bearing the latest date and time and shall reject and keep sealed the first absentee envelope. If more than one return envelope is received from the same voter who was not authorized to receive a 2nd state absentee ballot pursuant to section 753-B, then the clerk or warden shall process and count the ballot from the envelope bearing the earliest date and time. If only one return envelope is received from a voter who was authorized to receive a 2nd state absentee ballot pursuant to section 753-B, then the clerk or warden shall process and count that ballot for all offices or questions for which the voter was entitled to vote.

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Sec. 7. 21-A MRSA §759, sub-§1, as amended by PL 1995, c. 459, §76, is further amended to read:

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1. Warden to review notes of clerk. Unless a request to inspect applications—and envelopes is made pursuant to subsection 8, the warden shall review the notes of the clerk on each return envelope according to the schedule posted under subsection 7.

Sec. 8. 21-A MRSA §759, sub-§2, as amended by PL 1995, c. 459, §77, is further amended to read:

2. Accepted if correct. If the warden finds that the affidavit is properly completed, that the clerk has verified that the -signature - on - the - envelope - matches - the - signature - on - the application - where -applicable, and that the person is registered and enrolled where necessary, the warden shall then examine the incoming voting list to determine whether the voter voted in person at the election. The warden shall then announce the name of each absentee voter who has not voted at the election and remove each ballot from its envelope without destroying the envelope or unfolding the ballot. After having an election clerk from a political party different from that of the warden mark the letters "AV" beside the name of each absentee voter on the incoming voting lists, the warden shall accept the ballot.

Sec. 9. 21-A MRSA §759, sub-§3, ¶A, as amended by PL 1999, c. 645, §9, is repealed.

Sec. 10. 21-A MRSA §759, sub-§8, as repealed and replaced by PL 1999, c. 645, §10, is amended to read:

8. Inspection of absentee envelopes before processing. If a candidate or the candidate's representative notifies the clerk before 5 p.m. on the day before election day that the candidate or the candidate's representative wishes to inspect absentee ballot applications—and envelopes before they are processed, the warden or clerk shall allow the candidate or representative to inspect the applications—and envelopes of ballots before they are processed or for 30 minutes after the time specified in the notice for processing on election day. The warden may immediately proceed to process the ballots after the candidate or representative has completed the review.

If the municipality processes absentee ballots only after the polls close on election day, then the candidate or the candidate's representative must notify the warden by 5 p.m. on election day that the candidate or the candidate's representative wishes to inspect absentee ballot applications—and envelopes after the polls close. The warden shall allow the candidate or representative to inspect the applications—and envelopes for 30 minutes after the polls close. The warden may immediately proceed to process the ballots after the candidate or representative has completed the review.

Sec. 11. 21-A MRSA §760-A, sub-§1, as amended by PL 2001, c. 310, §57, is further amended to read:

2	1. Envelopes retained. The clerk shall retain posse	
	of return absentee envelopes withtheapplicationsatta	ehed,
4	whererequired, and the list required by section 7 subsection 6.	53-B,
6	Sec. 12. 21-A MRSA §762, first ¶, as enacted by PL 198	5, c.

An absentee ballot may not be rejected for any immaterial irregularity in completing the application of the return envelope. The following information must be on the

envelope for the ballot to be accepted:

161, §6, is amended to read:

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Sec. 13. 21-A MRSA §763, as amended by PL 1999, c. 645, §11, is further amended to read:

§763. Return of election materials

As soon as the ballots have been counted, the applications, where--required, absentee ballots, return envelopes, lists required by sections 753-B and 756 and other election materials must be repacked, in accordance with section 698, and returned to the clerk. The clerk shall keep them in the clerk's office for the time required by section 23.

Sec. 14. 21-A MRSA §764, as amended by PL 1997, c. 436, §115, is further amended to read:

§764. Envelopes as public records

Absentee ballot applications—and—absentee—ballot return envelopes are public records until the close of voting on election day, or until the ballots have been processed on election day, if the municipality processes absentee ballots before 8:00 p.m. After that time, except as provided in section 759, subsection 8, the applications—and envelopes are not public records and may be inspected only in accordance with this Title.

Sec. 15. 21-A MRSA §780, as repealed and replaced by PL 2003, c. 407, §31, is amended to read:

§780. Absentee ballots

A uniformed service voter or an overseas voter may request an absentee ballot as provided in section 753-A 753-B, subsection 1-A or by submitting a federal application or form requesting an absentee ballot. With respect to any election for federal office, a clerk may not refuse to accept or process any otherwise

application or registration absentee voter applieation request submitted by a uniformed service voter or an 2 overseas voter on the grounds that the voter submitted the applieation request more than 3 months before the election for which the application request will be used. -- An A federal application or request for an absentee ballot for a uniformed б service voter or overseas voter that is accepted pursuant--to seetien--753-A- remains valid through the next 2 regularly 8 scheduled general elections for federal office and entitles the voter to receive absentee ballots for all elections during that 10 period.

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Sec. 16. 21-A MRSA §780-A, as enacted by PL 2003, c. 407, §32, is amended to read:

§780-A. Use of blank write-in absentee ballot

Prior to the time when regular absentee ballots available or sent to voters, if an-applicant a voter requests a blank write-in absentee ballot or indicates that it takes more than 6 weeks to receive and return mail to the applicant's voter's location, the clerk shall send a blank write-in absentee ballot to the voter. Once the regular absentee ballots become available, the clerk shall issue a regular absentee ballot in response to any request under this section. If the clerk has issued a blank write-in absentee ballot to a voter before the regular absentee ballots become available, the clerk may send a regular absentee ballot to the voter, following the procedures for issuing a 2nd absentee ballot under section 753-B.

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Sec. 17. 21-A MRSA §781-A, as enacted by PL 2003, c. 407, §34, is repealed.

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Sec. 18. 21-A MRSA §791, sub-§1, as amended by PL 1999, c. 645, §12, is repealed and the following enacted in its place:

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1. Class E crime. A municipal clerk commits a Class E crime if that clerk, when a person has voted by absentee ballot in the clerk's presence under section 753-B, subsection 8, signs the clerk's name to an affidavit on the absentee ballot return envelope and the affidavit is not properly completed.

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SUMMARY

46 This bill amends the current absentee voting system to enhance voting by mail as follows:

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It repeals the application process for absentee voting;

- 2. It requires municipal clerks to mail ballots and return envelopes to registered voters 30 days before an election;
- 3. It requires the municipal clerk to verify the addresses of registered voters prior to mailing out ballots as provided in rules;
- 8 4. It allows persons who register after absentee ballots were mailed out to request a ballot by mail or receive one in person from the municipal clerk;
- 12 5. It provides a process for requesting an absentee ballot if that person was not automatically mailed one by the clerk or 14 if that person is a uniformed service voter or an overseas voter; and
- 6. It repeals provisions that allow 3rd-party or immediate family participation in voting by absentee ballot.