

State of Arkansas
91st General Assembly
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A Bill

HOUSE BILL 2162

By: Representative Gonzales

By: Senator D. Wallace

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO PROMOTE VOTER TURNOUT; TO AMEND THE LAW TO LIMIT THE DATES ON WHICH CERTAIN SPECIAL ELECTIONS CAN BE HELD; TO AMEND THE LAW THAT RESULTED FROM INITIATED ACT 1 OF 1942; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO PROMOTE VOTER TURNOUT; TO AMEND THE LAW TO LIMIT THE DATES ON WHICH CERTAIN SPECIAL ELECTIONS CAN BE HELD; TO AMEND THE LAW THAT RESULTED FROM INITIATED ACT 1 OF 1942.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 7, Chapter 11, Subchapter 3, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

7-11-304. Dates of special elections.

(a) The proclamation, ordinance, resolution, order, or other authorized document calling for a special election shall:

(1) Set the date of the special election; and

(2) Be filed at least seventy-five (75) days before the date the special election is to be held.

(b) If a special election is called in a year in which a preferential primary election or general election is held, the special election shall be held with the preferential primary election or general election.

(c) If a special election is called in a year in which a preferential



primary election or general election is not held, the special election shall be held on the Tuesday next after the first Monday in May or the Tuesday next after the first Monday in November.

(d) This section does not apply to special elections to fill vacancies in office, special runoff elections, or special elections otherwise provided for by law.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 2-16-504(b)(1), concerning elections to establish Johnson grass control and eradication districts, is amended to read as follows:

(b)(1) ~~Immediately upon the submission of~~ If the petition ~~to the county court or courts~~ is submitted under subdivision (a)(1) of this section, the court or courts shall issue a proclamation calling the election ~~in accordance with~~ under § 7-11-201 et seq. and notify the county board or boards of election commissioners in writing. The election shall be held on a date ~~in accordance with~~ under § 7-11-201 et seq. ~~but in no event more than ninety (90) days following publication of the proclamation.~~

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 3-8-205(e)(3), concerning an election date by petition regarding local option, is amended to read as follows:

(3) If the decision is in favor of the petitioners, then the county board of election commissioners shall set the day for the election, which shall be not earlier than sixty-five (65) days ~~nor later than ninety (90) days~~ after the final decision of the Supreme Court and shall be held on a date authorized under § 7-11-201 et seq.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-14-102 is amended to read as follows:

6-14-102. Annual school election date – Special school election.

(a)~~(1)~~ The annual school election shall be held in each school district of the state on the ~~third Tuesday in September~~ Tuesday next after the first Monday in November.

~~(2) The annual school election shall only concern issues authorized to be on the ballot by the Arkansas Constitution or by statute, and no other issues shall appear on the ballot.~~

(b) The board of directors of ~~any~~ a school district ~~shall have the authority to~~ may hold a school election concerning the tax rate or debt

issues on a date ~~other than that fixed by law~~ under § 7-11-304 provided that:

(1) All constitutional and statutory requirements for the annual school election are met, notwithstanding ~~subdivision~~ subsection (a)(1) of this section;

(2) The election is held before the date of the annual school election; and

(3) The Commissioner of Education approves the date of the election.

(c)(1) In ~~any~~ an annual school election ~~year~~ or special school election, if no more than one (1) candidate for ~~any~~ each school district director position presents a petition or notice as required by § 6-14-111 and if there ~~are~~ is no other ~~ballot issues to be submitted to school district electors for consideration~~ issue, measure, question, or candidate on the ballot, with the exception of the local tax rate if that rate is not being changed or restructured, the board of directors of ~~any~~ a school district, by resolution, may request the county board of election commissioners to reduce the number of polling places or to open no polling places on election day so that the election can be conducted by absentee ballot and early voting only.

(2)(A) If requested by ~~proper~~ resolution adopted by the board of directors of ~~any~~ a school district, the county board of election commissioners may provide that no polling places be open on election day so that the election can be conducted by absentee ballot and early voting only.

(B) If a county uses electronic voting machines or electronic vote tabulating devices, the county board of election commissioners may use:

(i) The electronic voting machines or electronic vote tabulating devices; or

(ii) Paper ballots counted by hand and provide no voting machines to be used in the election, notwithstanding any other provision in the Arkansas Code.

SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 6-14-118(a), concerning reimbursement for the cost of school elections, is amended to read as follows:

(a)(1) In school elections, the school districts in the county shall reimburse the county for the ~~cost of the election less expenses incurred for election officials at individual polling places~~ additional election costs

originating from the school election, with each school district's share of the total being determined by multiplying the total cost of the additional election costs originating from the school election by a fraction, the numerator of which is the number of votes cast in the specific school election and the denominator of which is the total number of votes cast in the entire election.

~~(2) Expenses incurred for election officials at individual polling places shall be paid by the school district in which the polling place is located.~~

SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 6-14-122(b), concerning dates for elections regarding the consolidation, annexation, or merger of school districts, is amended to read as follows:

(b) The boards of directors of the school districts may, by resolution duly adopted and with the approval of the Commissioner of Education, set a date for the annual school election in that year for the school districts involved on a date ~~other than the date set in § 6-14-102 for all school districts under § 7-11-304~~, provided only one (1) annual school election may be held in any school district in ~~one (1)~~ a calendar year.

SECTION 7. Arkansas Code § 6-53-602(b)(2), concerning publication of proclamation by a community college, is amended to read as follows:

(2)(A) The local board or acting local board shall issue a proclamation and set a date for the election under § 7-11-201 et seq., ~~but the date set for the election shall not be later than~~

(B) The local board or acting local board shall publish the proclamation at least ninety (90) days after the publication of the proclamation before the election date.

SECTION 8. Arkansas Code § 6-53-603(a)(2), concerning the date of election for a tax levy called by a local board of a community college, is amended to read as follows:

(2) ~~It~~ The tax may be reduced or repealed, with the exception of the amount of tax required to service ~~any~~ an outstanding ~~bonds~~ bond, or the tax may be increased upon approval ~~thereof~~ by a majority of the qualified electors of the district voting on the issue at ~~an~~ the next election called

by the local board or acting local board to be held ~~at least thirty (30)~~
~~calendar days after the local board or acting local board notifies the county~~
~~boards of election commissioners~~ under § 7-11-304.

SECTION 9. Arkansas Code § 6-53-604(b), concerning dissolution of a technical college district, is amended to read as follows:

(b)(1) ~~The petitions~~ A petition shall be filed with the Secretary of State, ~~who, within.~~

(2) The Secretary of State, within ten (10) days of the receipt and verification ~~by the Secretary of State~~ of the sufficiency of ~~the petitions,~~ a petition, shall notify the county ~~boards~~ board of election commissioners in each county in the district that an election ~~shall is to~~ be held ~~at a time not less than thirty (30) days nor more than one hundred eighty (180) days from the date of notification~~ under § 7-11-304.

SECTION 10. Arkansas Code § 7-1-101(16), concerning the definition of "general or special election", is amended to read as follows:

(16) "General or special election" means the regular biennial or annual election for election of United States, state, district, county, township, and municipal officials and the special elections to fill vacancies therein and special elections to approve any measure. ~~The term as used in this act shall not apply to school elections for officials of school districts;~~

SECTION 11. Arkansas Code § 7-11-205 is amended to read as follows:

7-11-205. Dates of special elections on measures and questions -
 Exceptions - Separate ballots.

(a)(1)(A) ~~Except as provided in subdivision (a)(1)(B) of this section,~~
~~all special elections~~ A special election on measures a measure or questions a question shall be held ~~on the second Tuesday of any month, except special elections held under this section in a month in which a preferential primary election or general election is scheduled to occur shall be held on the date of the preferential primary election or general election~~ under § 7-11-304.

~~(B)(i) Special elections scheduled to occur in a month in which the second Tuesday is a legal holiday shall be held on the third Tuesday of the month.~~

~~(ii) A special election called in June of an even-~~

~~numbered year shall be held on the fourth Tuesday of the month.~~

~~(2)(A)(b)(1)~~ If a special election is held on the date of the preferential primary election, the issue or issues to be voted upon at the special election shall be included on the ballot of each political party.

~~(B)(2)~~ The portion of the ballot containing the special election shall be labeled with a heading stating "SPECIAL ELECTION ON

_____ " with a brief description of the measure or question to be decided in the election.

~~(3)(c)~~ Separate ballots containing the issue or issues to be voted on at the special election and candidates for nonpartisan judicial office shall be prepared and made available to voters requesting a separate ballot.

~~(4)(d)~~ A voter shall not be required to vote in a political party's preferential primary in order to be able to vote in the special election.

~~(b)(1)~~ A special election shall be held not less than seventy (70) days following the date that the proclamation, ordinance, resolution, order, or other authorized document is filed with the county clerk when the special election is to be held on the date of the preferential primary election or general election.

~~(2)~~ If the special election is not held at the same time as a preferential primary election or general election, the special election shall be held not less than sixty (60) days following the date that the proclamation, ordinance, resolution, order, or other authorized document is filed with the county clerk.

SECTION 12. Arkansas Code § 14-14-917(a)(2), concerning special elections for referendum petition measures, is amended to read as follows:

(2) Referendum. Referendum petition measures may be submitted to the electors during a regular general election and shall be submitted if the adequacy of the petition is determined within the time limitation prescribed in this section. A referendum measure may also be referred to the electors at a special election called for the expressed purpose proposed by petition. However, no referendum petition certified within the time limitations established for initiative measures shall be referred to a special election, but shall be voted upon at the next regular election. No referendum election

shall be held ~~less than sixty (60) days after the certification of adequacy of the petition by the county clerk~~ on a date under § 7-11-304.

SECTION 13. Arkansas Code § 14-20-108(a)(1)(B)(i)(b), concerning special elections on the issue of the levy of volunteer fire department dues on residences, is amended to read as follows:

(b)~~(1)~~ The issue may be placed on the ballot at a special election by order of the quorum court in accordance with § 7-11-201 et seq.

~~(2) The special election shall be held by August 1.~~

SECTION 14. Arkansas Code § 14-47-140(d), concerning special elections for mayor, is amended to read as follows:

(d) The special election shall be held ~~not less than thirty (30) days nor more than one hundred twenty (120) days after the proclamation at the next special election date~~ under § 7-11-304.

SECTION 15. Arkansas Code § 14-48-104(b), concerning special elections after submission of governmental form question to electors, is amended to read as follows:

(b) If the number of signatures certified by the clerk is equal to or greater than fifteen percent (15%) of the aggregate number of votes cast, as prescribed, the Secretary of State shall call the election by proclamation ~~in accordance with, and an election shall be held under~~ § 7-11-201 et seq. ~~a special election to be held not more than ninety (90) days from the date of the clerk's certification.~~

SECTION 16. Arkansas Code § 14-57-704(a)(2), concerning special elections for the levy of a vehicle tax, is amended to read as follows:

(2) ~~This~~ The election shall be held ~~not more than ninety (90) days from the date of the publication of the proclamation, at which the qualified electors of the city or town shall vote on the question of the levy of the tax~~ at the next special election date under § 7-11-304.

SECTION 17. Arkansas Code § 14-61-113(1)(C), concerning special

elections called by petition, is amended to read as follows:

(C) The special election shall be held ~~not more than sixty (60) days~~ at the next special election date under § 7-11-304 after the proclamation calling the election, ~~provided that if the county board of election commissioners certifies in writing that it cannot prepare the ballots because of other pending elections, then the election can be held not more than ninety (90) days after the proclamation.~~

SECTION 18. Arkansas Code § 14-120-102(a), concerning elections in certain combination levee and drainage districts, is amended to read as follows:

(a)(1) ~~There shall be held an~~ An election shall be held annually on the Tuesday next after the first Monday in May in all combination levee and drainage districts where the boundaries of the districts embrace all of the lands within the corporate limits of a city of the first class and no lands situated more than three (3) miles from the corporate limits, for the election of one (1) member of the board of improvement.

(2) The judges of the election ~~are to~~ shall be appointed by the county board of election commissioners.

SECTION 19. Arkansas Code § 14-122-104 is amended to read as follows:
14-122-104. Filing referendum petitions – Special election.

If petitions signed by not less than fifteen percent (15%) of the qualified electors voting on the office of mayor in the city at the last preceding general election are filed with the city clerk of the city within forty-five (45) days after the enactment of the ordinance creating the municipal drainage improvement district requesting that the ordinance be referred to a vote of the qualified electors of the district, the petitions shall be referred to the people at a special election to be called by the mayor of the municipality in accordance with § 7-11-201 et seq. to be held ~~not more than ninety (90) days after the proclamation~~ at the next special election date under § 7-11-304.

SECTION 20. Arkansas Code § 14-125-302(c)(2)(A), concerning election dates for board of directors of conservation districts, is amended to read as follows:

(A) On the first Tuesday in March, 2000, and ~~on the first Tuesday in March~~ every third year thereafter on the date the preferential primary is held or, if no preferential primary is held, on the Tuesday next after the first Monday in May, in those districts ~~which~~ that have the greatest amount of district territory in the following counties:

Boone	Little River
Carroll	Logan
Clark	Lonoke
Clay	Poinsett
Cleburne	Polk
Cleveland	Saline
Columbia	Scott
Conway	Searcy
Crawford	St. Francis
Cross	White
Fulton	Woodruff
Greene	Yell
Jefferson	

SECTION 21. Arkansas Code § 14-201-316(a), concerning election of members of the board of public utilities, is amended to read as follows:

(a) In all cities and towns where a board of public utilities ~~shall be~~ is created under the provisions of this subchapter, there shall be held, ~~on a day to be designated by the county board of election commissioners not less than thirty (30) days nor more than sixty (60) days~~ at the next special election date under § 7-11-304 before the expiration of the term of office of any member of the board of public utilities, an election for the purpose of electing a member of the board to succeed the outgoing member.

SECTION 22. Arkansas Code § 14-284-212(g)(2)(B), concerning elections to approve increased assessments in fire protection districts outside of cities and towns, is amended to read as follows:

(B) The election called by the elected board of commissioners for an increase in the flat fee assessment shall be held ~~within ninety (90) days~~ at the next special election date under § 7-11-304 after the board of commissioners' meeting that approves the assessment increase.

SECTION 23. Arkansas Code § 14-286-103(a), concerning special elections on the question of the establishment and financing of a red imported fire ant abatement district, is amended to read as follows:

(a) The special election called by the county court to submit the question of the establishment and financing of a red imported fire ant abatement district to the electors of the proposed district shall be held in accordance with § 7-11-201 et seq. ~~no later than ninety (90) days after the proclamation of the election~~ and at the next special election date under § 7-11-304.

SECTION 24. Arkansas Code § 14-386-403(a), concerning elections on enclosures in fencing districts, is amended to read as follows:

(a) The county court shall in the same publication prescribed by § 14-386-402 give notice of and cause an election to be held ~~within thirty (30) days of the date of~~ on the next special election date under § 7-11-304 the filing of the petition, in the townships or parts of townships included in the petition, where the question of the creation of the proposed fencing district shall be submitted to the qualified electors living or owning land in the proposed district.

SECTION 25. Arkansas Code § 15-43-204(a)(1), concerning local elections to redetermine doe killing areas, is amended to read as follows:

(a)(1) Whenever fifty (50) or more qualified electors residing within an area wholly or partly located within their particular county that has been designated by regulation of the Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission as a doe-killing area petition the appropriate county court, praying that an election be held to determine whether or not such an area or portion thereof should remain a doe-killing area, the county court shall order a special election in accordance with § 7-11-201 et seq. to be held ~~not more than ninety (90) days after the date of filing of the petition~~ at the next special election date under § 7-11-304.

SECTION 26. Arkansas Code § 23-111-306(b)(1), concerning referendum elections on continuing greyhound racing, is amended to read as follows:

(b)(1) The date of the special election shall be fixed by the board ~~on~~

~~a day not more than ninety (90) days following the date of filing the petitions under § 7-11-304.~~ The deposit of the funds as provided in subsection (a) of this section and the election shall be conducted and shall be subject to contest under the general election laws of this state.

SECTION 27. Arkansas Code § 23-113-201(a)(2)(E), concerning elections to conduct wagering on electronic games of skill, is amended to read as follows:

(E) The election shall be held ~~no earlier than thirty-one (31) calendar days, and no later than one hundred twenty (120) calendar days, after the effective date of the ordinance in which the election is called by the governing body~~ at the next special election date after the ordinance is filed under § 7-11-304.