

JOINT COMMITTEE ON ELECTION LAWS
2025-2026 (194th) BILL SUMMARY

Bill Number: H.859

Title: An Act to consolidate ballot request notifications

Sponsor(s): Rep. Kelly Pease

Hearing Date: June 17, 2025

Reporting Deadline: 60 days from hearing date

Prior History: No prior history

CURRENT LAW: Section 34A of Chapter 53 of the General Laws states that prior to each biennial or special state primary the state secretary shall prepare in such quantities as he may deem necessary the following papers:—

(a) Official absent voting ballots, similar in all respects to the official ballot to be used at such primary, on paper similar in color to the official ballot of the respective parties. Instructions for the use of said absentee ballots may be printed on the back of the ballots.

(b) Blank forms of application for such ballots, worded substantially as provided by section eighty-seven of chapter fifty-four, except that the application shall indicate that the ballot is to be used at the primary, and shall also indicate the party whose ballot the voter desires to obtain.

Any form of written communication evidencing a desire that an absent voting ballot be sent to him for use of voting at any regular or special state primary or any presidential primary, and specifying the party whose ballot he desires to obtain, shall be given the same effect as an application for an absent voting ballot made in the form prescribed by law.

(c) Envelopes conforming substantially to subsections (c) and (d) of section eighty-seven of said chapter fifty-four.

SUMMARY: This bill requires the Secretary of the Commonwealth to send an annual mailing to all registered voters by February 15 each year. The mailing will include information on how to request a mail-in or absentee ballot for any election in that year and provide instructions for submitting ballot requests online, by phone, or by mail. The bill also prohibits additional mailings related to ballot requests for individual elections unless mandated by federal law.