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Absent Ballots Will Delay Nov. Election Totals

Legislation coming up in the next session of the Michigan state legislature may include an amendment to the amendments passed in the 1955 session which made it mandatory that absentee ballots be processed after the polls closed for the day.

Following the recent August primary election, municipal clerks are predicting that the coming November election will prove enough of a headache to make legislation of this problem a must.

When voting machines are used, absentee ballots must be transferred from the written ballots to the machine, before tabulation of precinct results may begin.

Before the 1955 legislation became law, this transferring could be accomplished during lulls while polls were open. Now it must be done after all the regular voting is completed.

THE CHANGE was occasioned by a desire for a check and balance system, or restraint upon election officials who conceivably could, under the old system, record the absentee ballots in any way they saw fit.

Now with the time definitely set, political party challengers know and can be at the polls when the transferring is done.

Irene Hanley, Birmingham's city clerk for the past 30 years, is one of the municipal clerks proposing that absentee ballot processing be done at some set time during the day, rather than after the polls close.

FOLLOWING the primary election, the first time in which the new law has really been tested outside of city elections where absentee ballots are few, Miss Hanley said the new provision was an unreasonable cause for delay in getting election returns.

"I always have opposed this plan," she said. "The former way was much better for machine precincts. But I do not want to suggest that the transfer of ballots to the machine be done in the absence of challengers."

Because the primary election this year was light, and due to

of Grand Rapids, president of the Municipal Clerks Assn., and chairman of the Michigan Municipal League's election committee, points out several reasons why the new system of taking care of absentee ballots needs revision.

He said when election board officials, who have been on duty since 6:30 a.m., must wait until after the polls close to transfer absentee ballots they are much more tired than if they could do so during a lull in the afternoon.

TO THIS is added the pressure of getting the results out as soon as possible, he said.

Changes have been suggested that would go along with the check and balance system and yet have the absentee ballots taken care of by the time the polls closed, with election results thereby speeded up.

One suggestion, backed by Miss Hanley, is that a time be set aside during the day for transferring the absentee ballots to the voting machine. This would still give political party challengers an opportunity to be at the polls at a specific time when the transfer was made.

THE SUGGESTION was that this be done only if there was suitable time, so that no voters coming to the polls would have to wait because of the absentee ballot processing.

"The 1955 amendment also limited the voting machine precincts to 1400 voters, so that most properly equipped precincts would have opportunity to take care of absentee ballots during the day," Miss Hanley said.

Another suggestion was that a tabulating center be set up to take care of absentee ballots. In this way absentee ballots could be taken care of by the time the polls closed, and these returns could be kept secret until all tabulations were completed.

EITHER of these suggestions, or any other alternatives, may be up for action when the 1957 legislature convenes in January.

(Advertisement)

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Modern Housewife Gets A Helping Hand From Her Favorite Restaurant

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Peoples Column LWV Appreciates News Articles

To the Editor:
 The League of Women Voters of Birmingham wishes to thank you for your recent fine editorial about the League and for your generous allocation of articles.

Your assistance is a great help to us in carrying out our purpose of promoting political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government.

MRS. JOHN D. RUMSEY
 President LWV
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General news deadline is 4:30 p.m. each Tuesday.

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