

Senate Debate on HF 2275, H-8205 Senate Amendment

Danielson: Thank you Madam President. 5128 solves a persistent problem we've had for a number of years. Iowa's current law as it relates to absentee ballots relies on the post office procedure called postmarking. Our law says a ballot is not valid if it has not been received on Monday night of an election week, with a valid post mark. The problem is the postal service cannot guarantee every ballot will be postmarked because of their internal technology procedures. So, we've had a couple of years here where we've tried to solve it...by switching the dates by looking at other procedures for counting those ballots the sum total is that some ballots who have been received by the post office according to our law's deadline don't end up being counted and through no fault of the owner (voter) those votes are not counted and we think that's wrong and we've tried to solve it.

This year we have a technology called bar code, I'm gonna use generally bar code technology but it is the IMB tracing system, it is a service offered by the post office. This amendment says that the postmark procedure is still there and available, but if an individual auditor would like to purchase this service from the postal office barcodes will be provided and put on the return envelope for every absentee ballot and then the postal service can guarantee near certainty for the date and time it passed through their system, if that is before midnight on Monday that ballot can be counted and we've solved the cases where the postmark is not there and it was in time so we will count more votes and enfranchise more Iowa voters because their efforts will show up.

You should know this was a bipartisan agreement we've worked with the House, the Secretary of State's Office, we think it's an elegant solution but we also do not think it is time to mandate it at this time. So the language says it is an option for auditors in this calendar year, primary and general elections that are coming up and then the Secretary of State will give us a report in January that says here are the counties that used it and here is the data to track those ballots and hopefully show that we have actually counted more votes because of it. That is the amendment Madam President, there is also effective upon enactment language, some auditors would like to do this in the primary so that gets them the opportunity and then emergency rules so that anything that needs to be solved after we pass the bill and the Governor signs it can be done before the primary elections. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

