

CHAPTER 147**(SB 128)**

AN ACT relating to a pilot program for unassisted voting by the blind.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

SECTION 1. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 117 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

- (1) For purposes of this section, "blind or visually impaired individual" means an individual who:*
 - (a) Has a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses or has a limited field of vision so that the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angle no greater than twenty (20) degrees;*
 - (b) Has a medically indicated expectation of visual deterioration;*
 - (c) Has a medically diagnosed limitation in visual functioning that restricts the individual's ability to read and write standard print at levels expected of individuals of comparable ability;*
 - (d) Has been certified as requiring permanent assistance to vote under KRS 117.255(5) for reason of blindness; or*
 - (e) Qualifies to receive assistance to vote under KRS 117.255(2) for reason of blindness.*
- (2) For purposes of this section, "pilot program" means a program in a county containing a consolidated local government or containing a city of the first class for unassisted voting by blind or visually impaired individuals.*
- (3) A county board of elections in a county containing a consolidated local government or containing a city of the first class may establish a pilot program. As part of this pilot program, the State Board of Elections shall approve the use of voting equipment under KRS 117.379 that is designed to permit blind and visually impaired individuals to vote without assistance, for use beginning in the 2002 general election. No county board of elections in a county containing a consolidated local government or containing a city of the first class shall be required to operate a pilot program.*
- (4) The State Board of Elections, if it approves the voting equipment under KRS 117.379, may approve the use of voting equipment designed to permit blind and visually impaired individuals to vote without assistance in as many locations within a county containing a consolidated local government or containing a city of the first class as are designated by the county board of elections.*
- (5) A county board of elections in a county containing a consolidated local government or containing a city of the first class shall provide a report to the State Board of Elections after every primary or general election regarding the number of blind or visually impaired individuals that have utilized the voting equipment during the pilot program.*
- (6) Notwithstanding the provisions of KRS 116.025, or any other statute to the contrary, a blind or visually impaired voter residing in a county containing a consolidated local government or containing a city of the first class that is operating a pilot program shall be permitted to vote at a location outside the precinct of his or her registration by voting*

at a location within the county of his or her registration on a voting machine designed to permit blind or visually impaired individuals to vote without assistance, which may include voting at the county clerk's office, or other place designated by the county board of elections, and approved by the State Board of Elections.

- (7) Notwithstanding the provisions of KRS 117.075, 117.085, 117.086, or 117.0863 or any other statute to the contrary, a blind or visually impaired individual residing in a county containing a consolidated local government or containing a city of the first class that is operating a pilot program shall be permitted to vote in the location within the county of his or her registration as provided under subsection (6) of this section, on a voting machine designed to permit blind or visually impaired individuals to vote without assistance, at any time during which absentee voting is conducted in the clerk's office or other place designated by the county board of elections during normal business hours on at least any of the twelve (12) working days before the election, and the county board of elections may permit the voting to be conducted on a voting machine for a period longer than the twelve (12) working days before the election prescribed above. An application for those blind or visually impaired individuals wishing to vote on a voting machine approved for use by blind or visually impaired individuals shall be prescribed by the State Board of Elections and shall include the individual's sworn statement that the individual is blind or visually impaired.*
- (8) Notwithstanding the requirements of KRS 117.381, or any other statute to the contrary, the State Board of Elections may certify, as a part of the pilot project of a county containing a consolidated local government or containing a city of the first class, voting equipment which utilizes audio recordings, voice-activated technology, or vocal recognition technology to record a vote, and may require such accommodations as would permit a blind or visually impaired voter to cast a vote in secret.*
- (9) Notwithstanding the provisions of KRS 117.255, a blind or visually impaired voter residing in a county containing a consolidated local government or containing a city of the first class that is operating a pilot project may cast his or her vote alone and without assistance on a voting machine approved for use by blind or visually impaired individuals. However, the blind or visually impaired voter shall be instructed by the officers of election, with the aid of the instruction cards and the model, in the use of the machine, if the voter so requests.*
- (10) Nothing in this section shall impair the right of any qualified voter under KRS 117.255 to receive assistance and vote according to the procedures specified in that section.*

Approved April 2, 2002