

Bill Requiring Election System to Compile List of Active and Inactive Voters Soon After General Election Hailed as Major Change by Supervisor

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Members of the Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection on Thursday approved a bill that would require the Supervisor of Elections to compile an active and inactive voter's list within 90 days after each general election beginning this cycle. An inactive voter is best described as someone who did not vote in two consecutive general elections.

Proposed by Senator Kenneth Gittens, he explained that the purpose of Bill 34-0230 is to provide an accurate list as well as statistics by establishing an active or inactive voting status for electors, rather than electors being arbitrarily taken off the electoral roll.

“What this also does is that it allows the Supervisor of Elections to examine all registration records and be able to contact electors who had not voted in the last two elections. They will also be notified that their voter registration has been placed on hold in an inactive status for possibly thirty days, giving them a time and the opportunity to request that their voter registration be reinstated,” Mr. Gittens said during the hearing.

Mr. Gittens, known for proposing [election-reform laws](#), further explained that the measure gives inactive voters the ability to update their status as late as 7:00 p.m. on election day, while providing them with ballots to vote in the same election.

“The voter will then be allowed to complete the voting process and have their registration status be placed back in active status,” Mr. Gittens said. “This essentially purges the voting system to allow the voter data to be more accurate and give a true picture of what the number is of registered voters and gauge the turnout more accurately.”

Elections Supervisor Caroline Fawkes told the committee that her office supports the bill but it sought one amendment. “We would like to enact this law 30 days after the governor signs,” she requested, describing the measure as a “major change for the Election System of the Virgin Islands.”

Ms. Fawkes told the committee that the goal of her office is to obtain an accurate voters’ participation rate for the 2022 General Election because during the four-year cycle — which is when the gubernatorial race is on the ballot — more voters participate.

“The [Election System of the Virgin Islands] does not want to see the fruits of our labor in 2024,” Ms. Fawkes said, explaining that the process can begin immediately. “We have the tools necessary to begin this process; we can change the status of non-voters in the 2014 through 2020 general elections from active to inactive beginning 30 days after the passage of this legislation,” she said.

“Based on our preliminary review of the number of registrants who have not voted in 2014-2016, we always look at two prior election years,” Ms. Fawkes explained. “In the STT/STJ District, that number is 4,803 and in the STX District, it is 4,512. The following four-year projection would be about half the number of voters to revert to inactive compared to the 2014-2016 totals.”

Ms. Fawkes said that changing from inactive to active in the registration database would come after carefully and methodically reviewing and verifying each individual voter’s history. “We then will bulk-mail the official Notice to Elector letter to every registrant on the inactive list created,” she said while explaining that each person who has not voted in the last two general elections would receive a letter from the Post Office informing them that they have 30 days to act before their status is deemed inactive.

The measure has been forwarded to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further vetting.

In other action, the committee approved Bill 34-0212, An Act amending Virgin Islands Code to include additional requirements for the notice and publication of lists of abandoned properties.