

Senate Bill No. 441

(By Senator Beach)

[Introduced January 28, 2014; referred to the Committee on
Government Organization; and then to the Committee on the
Judiciary.]

11 A BILL to amend and reenact §3-1-5 and §3-1-29 of the Code of West
12 Virginia, 1931, as amended, all relating to establishing
13 voting precincts and changing the composition of standard
14 receiving boards; increasing the limit on the size of voting
15 precincts to three thousand registered voters in urban areas
16 and one thousand five hundred in rural areas; permitting
17 precincts in urban or rural areas to have fewer than the
18 minimum numbers of registered voters allowed; permitting an
19 increase in the size of standard receiving boards in enlarged
20 precincts; providing an option to have more poll workers and
21 commissioners; and permitting fewer poll workers in precincts
22 during a municipal election where there is no simultaneous
23 state or county election.

1 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

2 That §3-1-5 and §3-1-29 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as
3 amended, be amended and reenacted, all to read as follows:

4 **ARTICLE 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.**

5 **§3-1-5. Voting precincts and places established; number of voters**
6 **in precincts; precinct map; municipal map.**

7 (a) The precinct ~~shall be~~ is the basic territorial election
8 unit. The county commission shall divide each magisterial district
9 of the county into election precincts, shall number the precincts,
10 shall determine and establish the boundaries thereof, and shall
11 designate one voting place in each precinct, which place shall be
12 established as nearly as possible at the point most convenient for
13 the voters of the precinct. Each magisterial district shall
14 contain at least one voting precinct and each precinct shall have
15 but one voting place therein.

16 Each precinct within any urban center shall contain not less
17 than three hundred nor more than one thousand five hundred
18 registered voters. Each precinct in a rural or less thickly
19 settled area shall contain not less than two hundred nor more than
20 seven hundred registered voters, ~~unless upon a written finding by~~
21 ~~the county commission that establishment of or retention of a~~
22 ~~precinct of less than two hundred voters would prevent undue~~
23 ~~hardship to the voters, the Secretary of State determines that such~~

1 ~~precinct be exempt from the two hundred voter minimum limit.~~ Upon
2 a written finding by the county commission that establishment of or
3 retention of a precinct of less than the minimum numbers allowed in
4 this subsection would prevent undue hardship to the voters, the
5 Secretary of State may determine that the precinct be exempt from
6 the minimum numbers allowed. If, at any time the number of
7 registered voters exceeds the maximum number specified, the county
8 commission shall rearrange the precincts within the political
9 division so that the new precincts each contain a number of
10 registered voters within the designated limits: Provided, That any
11 precincts with polling places that are within a one mile radius of
12 each other on or after July 1, 2014, may be consolidated, at the
13 discretion of the county clerk and county commission, into one or
14 more new precincts that contain not more than three thousand
15 registered voters in any urban center, nor more than one thousand
16 five hundred registered voters in a rural or less thickly settled
17 area: Provided, however, That no precincts may be consolidated
18 pursuant to this section if the consolidation would create a
19 geographical barrier or path of travel between voters in a precinct
20 and their proposed new polling place that would create an undue
21 hardship to voters of any current precinct.

22 If a county commission fails to rearrange the precincts as
23 required, any qualified voter of the county may apply for a writ of

1 mandamus to compel the performance of this duty: *Provided*, That
2 when in the discretion of the county commission, there is only one
3 place convenient to vote within the precinct and when there are
4 more than seven hundred registered voters within the existing
5 precinct, the county commission may designate two or more precincts
6 with the same geographic boundaries and which have voting places
7 located within the same building. The county commission shall
8 designate alphabetically the voters who ~~will be~~ are eligible to
9 vote in each precinct so created. Each ~~such~~ precinct shall be
10 operated separately and independently with separate voting booths,
11 ballot boxes, election commissioners and clerks, and whenever
12 possible, in separate rooms. No two of ~~such~~ the precincts may use
13 the same counting board.

14 (b) In order to facilitate the conduct of local and special
15 elections and the use of election registration records therein,
16 precinct boundaries shall be established to coincide with the
17 boundaries of any municipality of the county and with the wards or
18 other geographical districts of the municipality except in
19 instances where found by the county commission to be wholly
20 impracticable so to do. Governing bodies of all municipalities
21 shall provide accurate and current maps of their boundaries to the
22 clerk of any county commission of a county in which any portion of
23 the municipality is located.

1 (c) To facilitate the federal and state redistricting process,
2 precinct boundaries ~~must~~ shall be comprised of intersecting
3 geographic physical features or municipal boundaries recognized by
4 the U.S. Census Bureau. For purposes of this subsection,
5 geographic physical features include streets, roads, streams,
6 creeks, rivers, railroad tracks and mountain ridge lines. The
7 county commission of every county ~~must~~ shall modify precinct
8 boundaries to follow geographic physical features or municipal
9 boundaries and submit changes to the ~~West Virginia office of~~
10 Legislative Services Division of the Joint Committee on Government
11 and Finance by June 30, 2007 and by June 30, every ten calendar
12 years thereafter. The county commission ~~must~~ shall also submit
13 precinct boundary details to the U.S. Census Bureau upon request.

14 The ~~West Virginia office of~~ Legislative Services Division of
15 the Joint Committee on Government and Finance shall be available
16 for consultation with the county commission regarding the precinct
17 modification process: *Provided*, That nothing in this subsection
18 removes or limits the ultimate responsibility of the county
19 commission to modify precinct boundaries to follow geographic
20 physical features.

21 ~~(d) The provisions of this section are subject to the~~
22 ~~provisions of section twenty-eight, article four of this chapter~~
23 ~~relating to the number of voters in precincts in which voting~~
24 ~~machines are used.~~

1 ~~(e)~~ (d) The county commission shall keep available at all
2 times during business hours in the courthouse at a place convenient
3 for public inspection a map or maps of the county and
4 municipalities with the current boundaries of all precincts.

5 **§3-1-29. Boards of election officials; definitions, composition of**
6 **boards, determination of number and type.**

7 (a) For the purpose of this article:

8 (1) The term "standard receiving board" means those election
9 officials charged with conducting the process of voting within a
10 precinct and consists of no less than five persons, to be comprised
11 as follows: including one team of poll clerks, one team of election
12 commissioners for the ballot box and one additional election
13 commissioner: Provided, That if a municipal election is held at a
14 time when there is no county or state election, the standard
15 receiving board is to consist of four persons, including one team
16 of poll clerks and one team of election commissioners for the
17 ballot box;

18 ~~(2) The term "expanded receiving board" means a standard~~
19 ~~receiving board as defined in subdivision (1) of this subsection~~
20 ~~and one additional team of poll clerks;~~

21 (A) Each precinct shall have at least one team of poll clerks,
22 one team of election commissioners for the ballot box and one
23 additional election commissioner.

24 (B) At the discretion of the county clerk and the county

1 commission, any county may add additional teams of poll clerks and
2 commissioners to any precinct, as necessary to fairly and
3 efficiently conduct an election;

4 (2) If a municipal election is held at a time when there is no
5 county or state election, then the standard receiving board may, at
6 the discretion of the official charged with the administration of
7 election, consist of as few as four persons, including one team of
8 poll clerks and one team of election commissioners for the ballot
9 box;

10 (3) The term "counting board" means those election officials
11 charged with counting the ballots at the precinct in counties using
12 paper ballots and includes one team of poll clerks, one team of
13 election commissioners and one additional commissioner;

14 (4) The term "team of poll clerks" or "team of election
15 commissioners" means two persons appointed by opposite political
16 parties to perform the specific functions of the office: *Provided,*
17 That no team of poll clerks or team of election commissioners may
18 consist of two persons with the same registered political party
19 affiliation or two persons registered with no political party
20 affiliation; and

21 (5) The term "election official trainee" means an individual
22 who is sixteen or seventeen years of age who meets the requirements
23 of subdivisions (2), (3), (4), (5) and (6), subsection (a), section
24 twenty-eight of this article.

1 ~~(b) The composition of boards of election officials shall be~~
2 ~~as follows:~~

3 ~~(1) In any primary, general or special election other than a~~
4 ~~presidential primary or presidential general election, each~~
5 ~~election precinct is to have one standard receiving board;~~

6 ~~(2) In presidential primary and presidential general~~
7 ~~elections, each election precinct is to have one receiving board as~~
8 ~~follows:~~

9 ~~(A) For precincts of less than five hundred registered voters,~~
10 ~~one standard receiving board; and~~

11 ~~(B) For precincts of more than five hundred registered voters,~~
12 ~~one standard receiving board or, at the discretion of the county~~
13 ~~commission, one expanded receiving board.~~

14 ~~(3) In any election conducted using paper ballots, counting~~
15 ~~boards may be allowed or required as follows:~~

16 ~~(A) For any state, county or municipal special election, a~~
17 ~~counting board may be allowed at the discretion of the county~~
18 ~~commission;~~

19 ~~(B) In a statewide primary or general election, one counting~~
20 ~~board is required for any precinct of more than four hundred~~
21 ~~registered voters and one counting board may be allowed, at the~~
22 ~~discretion of the county commission, for any precinct of at least~~
23 ~~two hundred but no more than four hundred registered voters; and~~

24 ~~(C) In a municipal primary or general election, one counting~~

1 ~~board may be allowed, at the discretion of the municipal governing~~
2 ~~body, for any precinct of more than two hundred registered voters.~~

3 (c) (b) For each primary and general election in the county,
4 the county commission shall designate the number and type of
5 election boards for the various precincts according to the
6 provisions of this section. At least eighty-four days before each
7 primary and general election the county commission shall notify the
8 county executive committees of the two major political parties in
9 writing of the number of nominations which may be made for poll
10 clerks and election commissioners.

11 (d) (c) For each municipal election, the governing body of the
12 municipality shall perform the duties of the county commission as
13 provided in this section.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to establish voting precincts and change the composition of standard receiving boards. The bill increases the limit on the size of voting precincts to 3000 registered voters in urban areas and 1500 in rural areas, permitting precincts in urban or rural areas to have fewer than the minimum numbers of registered voters allowed. The bill permits an increase in the size of standard receiving boards in enlarged precincts; provides an option to have more poll workers and commissioners; and permits fewer poll workers in precincts during a municipal election where there is no simultaneous state or county election.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.