

## HOUSE BILL NO. 23

1       AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 23-15-639, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,  
2 TO REVISE THE TIME FOR THE RESOLUTION BOARD TO COUNT ABSENTEE  
3 BALLOTS; TO PROVIDE A DEADLINE FOR WHEN CERTAIN ABSENTEE BALLOTS  
4 MUST BE COUNTED BY; TO REQUIRE THE RESOLUTION BOARD TO POST THE  
5 VOTE TOTALS OF THE ABSENTEE BALLOTS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

6       BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

7       **SECTION 1.** Section 23-15-639, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
8 amended as follows:

9       23-15-639. (1) The examination and counting of all absentee  
10 ballots shall be conducted as follows:

11               (a) At the opening of the regular balloting and at the  
12 opening of the polls, the resolution board established under  
13 Section 23-15-523 and trained in the process of canvassing  
14 absentee ballots shall first take the envelopes containing the  
15 absentee ballots of such electors from the secure location at the  
16 registrar's office, and the name, address and precinct inscribed  
17 on each envelope shall be announced by the resolution board.

18               (b) (i) For absentee ballots that were received by  
19 mail, the signature on the application shall then be compared with

20 the signature in the box on the back of the envelope. A portion  
21 of the elector's signature extending outside of the box shall not  
22 be grounds for rejecting that elector's ballot. If it corresponds  
23 and the affidavit, if one is required, is sufficient and the  
24 resolution board finds that the applicant is a registered and  
25 qualified voter or otherwise qualified to vote, the envelope shall  
26 then be opened and the ballot removed from the envelope, without  
27 its being unfolded, or permitted to be unfolded or examined.

28 (ii) For absentee ballots that were cast in person  
29 in the registrar's office, the resolution board shall confirm that  
30 the voter completed the application on the front of the envelope  
31 and signed the elector's certificate in the box on the back of the  
32 envelope. If it is signed and the resolution board finds that the  
33 applicant is a registered and qualified voter or otherwise  
34 qualified to vote, the envelope shall be opened and the absentee  
35 ballot removed from the envelope, without its being unfolded, or  
36 permitted to be unfolded or examined.

37 (c) Having observed and found the ballot to be regular  
38 as far as can be observed from its official endorsement, the  
39 resolution board shall deposit it in the ballot box with the other  
40 ballots before counting any ballots and enter the voter's name in  
41 the receipt book provided for that purpose. All absentee ballots  
42 received prior to 7:00 p.m. the day before the election shall be  
43 counted in the registrar's office by the resolution board when the  
44 polls \* \* \* open and then added to the votes cast in each



45     precinct. Once the resolution board has counted all of the  
46     absentee ballots received before 7:00 p.m. the day before the  
47     election, they shall post the vote totals of those absentee  
48     ballots. All absentee ballots received after 7:00 p.m. the day  
49     before the election but not later than the fifth business day  
50     after the election shall be processed by the resolution board by  
51     5:00 p.m. on the sixth business day after the election.

52                 (2) The resolution board shall also take such action as may  
53     be prescribed by the Secretary of State to ensure compliance with  
54     the identification requirements of Section 23-15-563.

55                 (3) The resolution board shall process the absentee ballots  
56     using the procedure provided in subsection (1) of this section.

57                 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
58     and after July 1, 2025.

