House Bill 11EX2

By: Representatives Smith of the 175th, Turnquest of the 73rd and Dukes of the 161st

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

To amend Chapter 2 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to elections and primaries generally, so as to change the time for the closing of the polls on primary and election days; to provide for related matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Chapter 2 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to elections and primaries generally, is amended by striking Code Section 21-2-403, relating to time of opening and closing of polls, in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof a new Code Section 21-2-403 to read as follows:

"21-2-403.

At all primaries and elections the polls shall be opened at 7:00 A.M. eastern standard time or eastern daylight time, whichever is applicable, and shall remain open continuously until 7:00 P.M. eastern standard time or eastern daylight time, whichever is applicable, at which time they shall be closed; provided, however, that, in all cities having a population of 300,000 or more according to the United States decennial census of 1970 or any future such census, the polls shall remain open continuously until 8:00 P.M. eastern standard time or eastern daylight time, whichever is applicable, during the cities´ general elections, at which time they shall be closed and provided, further, that, in a special election held to fill a vacancy in an office in which the district represented by such office lies wholly within the boundaries of a city, the polls shall close at the same time as for a municipal general election in such city."

SECTION 2.

Said chapter is further amended by striking subsection (a) of Code Section 21-2-437, relating to procedure as to count and return of votes generally, and inserting in lieu thereof a new subsection (a) to read as follows:

"(a) After the polls close ~~at 7:00 P.M.~~ and as soon as all the ballots have been properly accounted for and those outside the ballot box as well as the voter´s certificates, numbered list of voters, and electors list have been sealed, the poll officers shall open the ballot box and take therefrom all ballots contained therein. In primaries in which more than one ballot box is used, any ballots or stubs belonging to another party holding its primary in the same polling place shall be returned to the ballot box for the party for which they were issued. In primaries, separate tally and return sheets shall be prepared for each party, and separate poll officers shall be designated by the chief manager to count and tally each party´s ballot. Where the same ballot box is being used by one or more parties, the ballots and stubs shall first be divided by party before being tallied and counted. The ballots shall then be counted one by one and a record made of the total number. Then the chief manager, together with such assistant managers and other poll officers as the chief manager may designate, under the scrutiny of one of the assistant managers and in the presence of the other poll officers, shall read aloud the names of the candidates marked or written upon each ballot, together with the office for which the person named is a candidate, and the answers contained on the ballots to the questions submitted, if any; and the other assistant manager and clerks shall carefully enter each vote as read and keep account of the same in ink on a sufficient number of tally papers, all of which shall be made at the same time. All ballots, after being removed from the box, shall be kept within the unobstructed view of all persons in the voting room until replaced in the box. No person, while handling the ballots, shall have in his or her hand any pencil, pen, stamp, or other means of marking or spoiling any ballot. The poll officers shall immediately proceed to canvass and compute the votes cast and shall not adjourn or postpone the canvass or computation until it shall have been fully completed, except that, in the discretion of the superintendent, the poll officers may stop the counting after all contested races and questions are counted, provided that the results of these contested races and questions are posted for the information of the public outside the polling place and the ballots are returned to the ballot box and deposited with the superintendent until counting is resumed on the following day."

SECTION 3.

This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law without such approval.

SECTION 4.

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.