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SPONSOR STATEMENT **HB 13**

“An Act requiring notice of the postage required to mail an absentee ballot on the envelope provided by the division of elections for returning an absentee ballot; and repealing the authority to include certain material from a political party in the election pamphlet.”

Current statute allows political parties to purchase two pages of material in the Official Election Pamphlet, the state’s publication to alert the public of candidates for office. In the past, political parties have used the pages to give general information about their platforms, however, in the 2014 election, an attack ad against a candidate was placed in the Official Election Pamphlet for the first time by a party. It may be that no party realized they could use their space for this purpose, or only one party chose to do so. That is irrelevant. No political party has proven to be above placing attack ads, and in the future we can expect to see more of these from multiple parties, turning a relatively non-partisan pamphlet into one that adds to the excessive noise of undesirable attack ads during election season. This bill repeals those sections of the law that allow political parties to place ads in the Official Election Pamphlet.

HB 13 also addresses the issue of postage on absentee ballots. Voters are often unaware that an absentee ballot requires more than a first class stamp for postage. The postage required to mail in an absentee ballot varies from year to year, depending on the size of the ballot. If voters do not affix the correct postage, the post office delivers the ballot to the Division of Elections, but the Division must pay the missing postage. There is no way to guarantee that all postal employees actually deliver ballots with insufficient postage to the Division. To save the Division money, and prevent the inadvertent return of a ballot to a voter, thereby disenfranchising that person, a visible statement in the area of the postage stamp box on the envelope about the necessary postage should be required.