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7 CFR Ch. VII (1-1-01 Edition)

§717.14 County committee's canvass of ballots.

The county committee, after the closing of the polls, shall open and canvass the absentee ballots received and determine the eligibility of each voter. If any person voting absentee is found to be ineligible to vote, or the ballot is so mutilated or marked that it is not possible to determine with certainty how the person intended to vote, such ballot shall not be counted as for or against the question in the referendum. The county committee shall meet and pass upon the challenged ballots as soon as may be reasonably possible after the challenged ballots are received from the community referendum committees, but not later than 4 calendar days after the day of the referendum. The result of the referendum in each community shall be reviewed and summarized as soon as may be reasonably possible after the records, ballots, and forms are received from the several community referendum committees. Every meeting of the county committee for the purpose of canvassing the ballots cast and reviewing and tabulating the results of the referendum shall be open to the public. No member of the county committee who learns how any person besides himself voted, whether the ballot was an absentee ballot, challenged, spoiled, or otherwise, shall disclose such knowledge to any fellow committeeman or other person except in an investigation conducted under this part.

§717.15 County committee's reporting and record of results of the referendum.

The county committee shall notify the State committee by telephone, telegraph, or messenger (who may be a member of the county committee), as to the preliminary count of the votes on each question and the number of challenged ballots by the several community referendum committees as soon as possible. The county committee shall, as soon as may be reasonably possible, but in no event later than 4 calendar days after the date of the referendum, have prepared and certified the county summary of ballots. Such summary shall be prepared and cer-

tified in triplicate, one copy of which shall be sent to the State committee, one copy posted for 30 calendar days in a conspicuous place accessible to the public in or near the office of the county committee, and one copy filed in the office of the county committee and kept available for public inspection. One copy of each community summary shall likewise be posted for 30 calendar days in a conspicuous place accessible to the public in or near the office of the county committee.

§717.16 Investigation as to correctness of summary of the referendum.

The county committee shall make an investigation in each case of a dispute or challenge regarding the correctness of the summary of the referendum in a community. No dispute or challenge shall be investigated by the county committee unless it is brought to its attention within 3 calendar days after the date on which the referendum was held. The county committee shall promptly decide the dispute or the challenge and report its findings to the State committee within 5 calendar days after the holding of the referendum and send by certified mail, or deliver in person, to the office of the State committee all voted ballots, register forms, and community summary sheets involved in the dispute or challenge.

§717.17 State committee's reporting and record of result of the referendum.

The State committee for each State shall notify the Deputy Administrator by telegraph or telephone as to the preliminary count of the votes in the State as soon as the preliminary results of the referendum are made known to the State committee. The county summaries of ballots shall be summarized on the State summary of ballots as soon as possible, but in no event later than 7 calendar days after the date of the referendum, unless there is a dispute or challenge regarding the correctness of the summary for any county, in which case the State committee shall complete its investigation thereof, decide the dispute or challenge, and prepare the State summary accordingly within 14 calendar

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days after the date of the referendum. The State summary shall be prepared in triplicate and certified to by the State executive director. The original and one copy of the State summary shall be forwarded to the Director of the FSA Division having the responsibility for the commodity for which the referendum was held. One copy of the State summary shall be filed for a period of 5 years in the office of the State committee available for public inspection.

[33 FR 18345, Dec. 11, 1968, as amended by Amdt. 1, 34 FR 12940, Aug. 9, 1969]

HOLDING REFERENDA BY MAIL BALLOT

§ 717.18 Issuing ballots.

The county committee shall furnish each person who is eligible to vote in a particular referendum a ballot suitable for mailing back to the office of the county committee. If a person who is eligible to vote in a particular referendum is not furnished a ballot, he may obtain one during the referendum period from the office of the county committee for the county in which he is eligible to vote or from any other FSA office where ballots are available, including the Commodity Programs Division, FSA, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. When a ballot is issued from an FSA office other than the FSA office in the county in which the producer is eligible to vote in a particular referendum, the issuing office shall keep a register showing to whom it was issued, the person's address, the county and State in which the ballot is to be voted, and the name and title of the person who issued the ballot.

[33 FR 18345, Dec. 11, 1968, as amended by Amdt. 1, 34 FR 12940, Aug. 9, 1969]

§ 717.19 Manner of voting.

(a) *Voting procedure.* Each person to whom a ballot is issued by mail or in person may vote in the referendum by marking the ballot so as to indicate clearly how the vote is cast, placing the ballot in a plain envelope, sealing the envelope provided by FSA which is marked clearly with the voter's name and return address, signing the certification on such envelope or making his mark thereto (which mark shall be wit-

nessed), sealing such envelope, and delivering or mailing the envelope to the office of the county committee for the county in which the person is eligible to vote.

(b) *Voting by proxy prohibited.* There shall be no voting by proxy or agent except as provided in § 717.3.

(Secs. 312, 317, 336, 343, 344, 354, 358, 375, 52 Stat. 46, as amended, 79 Stat. 66, 52 Stat. 55, as amended, 56, as amended, 79 Stat. 1197, 52 Stat. 61, as amended, 55 Stat. 88, as amended, 52 Stat. 66, as amended; 7 U.S.C. 1312, 1314c, 1336, 1343, 1344b, 1354, 1356, 1375)

[Amdt. 2, 36 FR 12730, July 7, 1971, as amended by Amdt. 4, 49 FR 24371, June 13, 1984]

§ 717.20 Receiving and tabulating voted ballots.

Ballots received at the county FSA office during the referendum period shall be placed immediately in a ballot box provided by the county executive director and so arranged that ballots cannot be read or removed without breaking the seal on the container. Voted ballots received by the county committee of the county in which the voter is eligible to vote during the period established for holding a particular referendum, shall be tabulated by the county committee. A ballot shall be considered to have been received during the referendum period if (a) in the case of a ballot delivered to the county committee, it was received in the office prior to the close of the work day on the final day of the referendum period, or (b) in the case of a mailed ballot, it was postmarked not later than midnight of the final day of the referendum period and was received in the county office prior to the start of canvassing the ballots. However, no such ballot shall be counted unless the voter signs the certification or his mark is witnessed on the returned envelope, and it is determined that he is eligible to vote in the particular referendum.

(Secs. 312, 317, 336, 343, 344, 354, 358, 375, 52 Stat. 46, as amended, 79 Stat. 66, 52 Stat. 55, as amended, 56, as amended, 79 Stat. 1197, 52 Stat. 61, as amended, 55 Stat. 88, as amended, 52 Stat. 66, as amended; 7 U.S.C. 1312, 1314c, 1336, 1343, 1344b, 1354, 1356, 1375)

[33 FR 18345, Dec. 11, 1968, as amended by Amdt. 4, 49 FR 24371, June 13, 1984]