

hours when the polls will be opened and closed. The county executive director is authorized to sign such notice on behalf of the county committee.

(b) *Use of agencies of public information.* The county committee and community referendum committees shall utilize, to the extent practicable (without advertising expense), all available agencies of public information, including newspapers, radio, television and other means, to give persons in the county public notice of the day and hours of voting, the location of polling places, and the rules governing eligibility to vote. Such notice should be given as soon as practicable after the arrangements for holding the referendum in the county have been made.

§717.9 Manner of voting.

(a) *Secret ballot.* The voting in the referendum shall be by secret ballot. Each voter shall, at the time he is handed the form on which to cast his ballot, be instructed to mark his ballot form so as to indicate clearly how he votes and in such manner that no one else shall see how he votes and then to fold his ballot and place it in the ballot box without allowing anyone else to see how he voted. A suitable place where each voter may mark and cast his ballot in secret and without coercion, duress, or interference of any sort whatever, shall be provided in each polling place. Every unchallenged ballot shall be placed in the ballot box by the person who voted it. The fact that a voter fails to fold a ballot placed in the ballot box shall not invalidate it. It shall be the duty of each community referendum committee to see that no device of any sort whatever is used whereby any voter's ballot may be identified except as provided in this part in the case of a challenged ballot or an absentee ballot.

(b) *Voting by proxy prohibited.* There shall be no voting by proxy or agent, or in any manner except by the eligible voter (or the challenged voter under paragraph (d) of this section) personally depositing in the ballot box his ballot as marked by him (except as provided in the case of an absentee ballot), but a duly authorized officer of a cor-

poration, association, or other legal entity, may cast its vote.

(c) *Absentee ballots.* Any person who will not be present on the day of the referendum in the county in which he is eligible to vote or who will be prevented from voting in person on the day of the referendum because of physical incapacity, or whose religious belief forbids him from voting on the day of the referendum, may obtain prior to the date of the referendum, one ballot from a State or county FSA office conveniently situated for him, or from the Commodity Programs Division, FSA, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., and cast an absentee ballot. The office so issuing the ballot form shall endorse on the reverse side thereof a statement in substantially the following form identifying the place in which it was issued and the county to which it will be mailed or delivered, initialed and dated by the person issuing such form.

Issued in _____ County _____ State, or
by _____ State FSA Office, or by
_____ Division, FSA, Washington,
D.C., for use in _____ County, _____
State.

The issuing office shall keep a register showing for each ballot form so issued by it to be voted absentee, the name and address to whom issued, the date of issuance, and the county and State in which the ballot is to be voted, and the name and title of the person who issued the ballot. The person to whom the ballot is issued shall mark the ballot so as to indicate clearly how he votes and place the ballot in a plain envelope which shall be marked clearly with the words "Absentee Ballot," sealed and inserted in another envelope which shall be marked clearly with the voter's name and return address, sealed and delivered, or mailed, postage paid, to the county committee for the county in which he is eligible to vote. All absentee ballots must, in order to be accepted, reach the county office for the county in which the voter is eligible to vote by not later than the hour for closing the polls in the county on the day of the referendum. No such ballot shall be counted unless the voter's name and address appear on the envelope and it is determined that he is eligible to vote.

§717.10

(d) *Challenged ballots.* The community referendum committee or any member thereof shall challenge the eligibility of any person to vote in the referendum where (1) the community referendum committee or any member thereof is unable to determine that the person is eligible to vote in the referendum in the community, or (2) the community referendum committee or any member thereof has reason to believe that such person has previously voted in the referendum in another community in the same or another county in person or by mail, or (3) the person's name and address have not been entered on the register of eligible voters, prior to its delivery to the referendum committee, unless the referendum committee is satisfied that the person is eligible to vote. In every case where the eligibility of the voter is challenged, his ballot form, after being marked by the challenged person so as to show how he votes, but in such manner that no one else sees how he votes, shall be folded and placed by him (or by a member of the committee if he refuses) in an envelope, which shall then be sealed and placed in another envelope, identified with his name and address, the word "Challenged" and a statement of the reason for the challenge, and shall then be placed in the ballot box. The county committee shall make an investigation in each case of controversy or dispute regarding the eligibility of a voter to vote in the referendum. In each case of a challenged ballot the eligibility of the person to vote in the referendum shall be determined by the county committee as soon as may be possible after the polls are closed and before the time for forwarding to the State committee the county summary of ballots. If it is determined that the person whose vote was challenged is eligible to vote, the sealed envelope containing the ballot shall be placed with the challenged ballot of every other person found to be eligible to vote until all challenged ballots have been passed upon by the county committee. If it is determined that the person whose vote was challenged is not eligible, the sealed envelope shall be marked "Not eligible" and signed by a member of the county committee and shall not be opened. When all of the challenged ballots have

7 CFR Ch. VII (1-1-04 Edition)

been passed upon by the county committee, the challenged ballots which were cast by eligible voters shall be opened and tabulated on the county summary of ballots, but no disclosure shall be made as to how any particular person voted.

(e) *Ballot box.* Each polling place shall be furnished with a suitable ballot box. Any container of sufficient size so arranged that no ballot can be read or removed without breaking seals on the container will be suitable. When strip adhesive paper or corresponding seals are used on the ballot box, such seals shall be signed or initialed by the chairman or a member of the community referendum committee so that breaking or replacing the seal will so destroy or affect the identifying marks as to show that the seal has been tampered with.

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

§717.10 Local arrangements for holding the referendum.

The county committee shall make all arrangements for the proper holding of the referendum in accordance with this part prior to the date of the referendum. The county committee shall instruct each community referendum committee concerning its duties so that each member of the committee understands his duties and the duties of the committee in all respects, with particular emphasis as to (a) issuing ballot forms, (b) challenged ballots, (c) recording votes, (d) tabulating ballots, and (e) certifying results of the referendum in the referendum community. The county executive director shall furnish each community referendum committee an adequate supply of forms prior to the time the polls in the county are opened for the acceptance of ballots, by delivering the ballot forms and the forms for the community summary of ballots to each chairman of the several community referendum committees.

§717.11 Issuing ballots.

The community referendum committee shall open the polling place for the issuance of ballot forms and the casting of ballots at the time designated and shall thereafter until the