

envelope and instructions, and marks the ballot, executes the oath on the ballot envelope before any member of the Board, who shall take the oath and witness the same, and leaves said ballot envelope, with the ballot enclosed and sealed therein, with the Board at its regular office. Thereafter the Board shall follow the same procedure as to ballot envelope and ballots cast by any such honorably discharged Absentee Resident, as is set forth in the other provisions of this sub-title for ballot envelopes and ballots cast by other Absentee Residents.

**256. Count of Absentee Ballots.** (a) *Procedure.* Immediately after the completion of the canvass of the votes cast at the regular voting places in this State at any election, the several Boards shall meet at the usual place for holding the Circuit Court for the County or in Baltimore City at the offices of the Supervisors of Elections and shall there first register all Absentee Residents entitled thereto and not previously registered, and such registration shall be deemed to have been made on the day of said election and prior to the casting of their votes by such Absentee Residents. Immediately after completing such registration, said several Boards shall proceed to count, certify and canvass the ballots contained in the Ballot Envelopes, received by them from the Secretary of State as hereinbefore provided, at any time prior to the closing of the polls on election day. Whenever any Board shall determine from proof or investigation that any person who has marked and transmitted an Absentee Ballot, whether under Act of Congress or the provisions of this sub-title, has died before election day, said Board shall not count the ballot of said deceased voter, but it shall be preserved by said Board for six months and may then be destroyed, unless prior to that time the Board be ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction to keep the same for any longer period. Unless at or prior to the time of such counting and canvassing the Board shall have determined that the Absentee Resident who marked a ballot had died before election day, said ballot shall be counted, and the fact that said Absentee Resident may later be shown to have been actually dead on election day shall not invalidate said ballot or said election. If said Board determines that said Absentee Resident voted in person at said election, his Absentee Ballot shall not be counted.

(b) *Opening Ballot Envelopes.* If said Boards determines that the provisions for filling out and signing the oath on the outside of the Ballot Envelope have been substantially complied with and that the person signing the voter's oath is entitled to vote under this sub-title in any precinct or election district or ward of their respective County or City, as the case may be, and has not already voted therein on election day, they shall open the Ballot Envelope and remove the ballot therefrom and place it in a ballot box or ballot boxes prepared for that purpose. The Board shall not open or unfold any Absentee Ballot at any time prior to counting the same. When any Ballot Envelope is opened, the Board shall enter in the appropriate register the fact that the voter whose name appears thereon has voted, using the initials "V. M." to indicate that the vote has been by mail. If there be more than one ballot in the Ballot Envelope, all shall be rejected. State or Federal "Absentee Ballots" may be marked by any kind of pencil or ink. All Absentee Ballots shall be kept separate and apart from ballots cast at the regular voting places and retained for six (6) months after the date of