

**§ 18B-601. Election procedure.**

(a) Generally. – Except as otherwise provided in this section, an alcoholic beverage election shall be conducted in the same manner and under the same rules as a referendum under Chapter 163.

(b) How County Election Called. – A county alcoholic beverage election shall be conducted by the county board of elections. When a county is eligible to hold an election under G.S. 18B-600, the county board of elections shall hold the election upon receiving either:

- (1) A written request for an election from the governing body of the county; or
- (2) A petition requesting an election signed by at least thirty-five percent (35%) of the voters registered in the county at the time the petition was initiated.

(c) How City Election Called. – A city alcoholic beverage election shall be conducted by the county board of elections or, in the case of a city authorized under Chapter 163 to conduct its own elections, by the city board of elections. When a city is eligible to hold an election under G.S. 18B-600, the board of elections shall hold the election upon receiving either:

- (1) A written request for an election from the city governing body; or
- (2) A petition requesting an election signed by at least thirty-five percent (35%) of the voters registered in the city at the time the petition was initiated.

(d) Form of Request. – A request or petition for a malt beverage election shall state which of the four propositions in G.S. 18B-602(a) are to be voted upon. A request or petition for an unfortified wine election shall state which of the three propositions in G.S. 18B-602(d) are to be voted upon. More than one kind of alcoholic beverage election may be included in a single request or petition.

(e) Petitions. – A petition for an election shall be on a form provided by the appropriate local board of elections and shall contain the signature, name, address and precinct of each voter who signs. A petition shall be considered initiated at the time the form is delivered by the board of elections to the person who requests it. Within 72 hours after the petition is initiated, the board of elections shall certify the number of registered voters in the city or county at the time it was initiated. The petition shall be returned to the board of elections within 90 days of the time it is initiated. Failure to return the petition within that time shall render it void. The board of elections shall determine the sufficiency of the petition within 30 days after it is returned.

(f) Election Date. – The board of elections shall conduct and set the date for the alcoholic beverage election in accordance with G.S. 163-287.

(g) Registration. – No separate registration shall be required to vote in an alcoholic beverage election. Registration shall be closed for an alcoholic beverage election in the same manner and under the same schedule as for any other election.

(h) Notice. – The board of elections shall give notice of an alcoholic beverage election and notice of the close of registration in the same manner and under the same schedule as for any other election.

(i) Observers. – The proponents and opponents for an alcoholic beverage election, as determined by the local board of elections, shall have the right to appoint two observers to attend each voting place. The persons authorized to appoint observers shall, by noon on the business day before the observer is scheduled to serve, submit in writing to the county board of elections a signed list of the observers appointed for voting places in that county. Before each voting place opens for voting, the county board of elections shall provide a copy of the list of appointed observers for each voting place to the chief judge for that respective voting place. The persons appointed as observers shall be registered voters of the county in which appointed to serve. The chief judge and judges for the voting place may challenge the appointment of an observer in accordance with G.S. 163-45.1. Observers shall do no electioneering at the voting place nor in any manner impede the voting process, interfere or communicate with or observe any voter in casting his ballot. Observers shall be permitted in the voting place to make such observation and

to take such notes as they may desire. (1937, c. 49, ss. 25, 26; c. 431; 1947, c. 1084, ss. 1, 2, 4; 1951, c. 999, ss. 1, 2; 1957, c. 816; 1963, c. 265, ss. 1-3; 1965, c. 506; 1969, c. 647, s. 1; 1971, c. 872, s. 1; 1973, cc. 32, 33; 1977, c. 149, s. 1; c. 182, s. 2; 1977, 2nd Sess., c. 1138, s. 15; 1979, c. 140, ss. 2, 3; c. 609, s. 1; c. 683, s. 13; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1174; 1981, c. 412, s. 2; 1985, c. 705, ss. 1, 2.1; 1987, c. 14; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 762, s. 8; 2013-381, s. 10.3; 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-146, ss. 3.1(a), (b), 6.1; 2023-140, s. 7(d).)