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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
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Office

S.B. 191
133rd General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for S.B. 191's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Gavarone

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- The Secretary of State will incur some costs for establishing a secure online process for applying to vote through absentee ballot. The costs would be paid from Fund 5990, appropriation item 050630, Elections Support Supplement.
- During the 2018 general election, there were slightly more than one million absent voter ballot applications submitted statewide. Just over 940,000 ballots were returned.
- If the secure online process for applying to vote through absentee ballot required by the bill results in an increase in the number of absent voter's ballots requested, some county boards of elections could see an increase in ballot mailing costs.
- Alternatively, the ability to electronically request an absent voter's ballot application could potentially reduce county boards of elections costs for mailing absent voter ballot applications.

Detailed Analysis

Online applications for absent voter's ballots

The bill requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to establish a secure online process for applying to vote by absent voter's ballot. As a result, the SOS will incur some new IT costs for implementing such a system. The system would be similar to the online portal for voter registration and registration status changes currently operated by the SOS, whereby this information is subsequently transferred to the applicable county board of elections. Any new costs to implement this system would be paid from the Business Services Fund (Fund 5990), through appropriation item 050630, Elections Support Supplement.

Absent voter's ballot mailings

The bill maintains continuing law that permits voters to request absent voter's ballots either in person or via mail. Therefore, as far as county boards of elections are concerned, the cost of the bill will depend on how many individuals request absent voter's ballots online under the bill rather than through current available methods. Many counties currently have an electronic system for requesting an absent voter's ballot. However, for those counties that do not, they would be required to mail an absent voter's ballot application to individuals that request one. In these cases, the system established in the bill could ultimately reduce overall ballot application mailing costs. However, if the online system in the bill results in an increase in requested absent voter's ballots, there could be an increase in mailing costs to counties with respect to mailing the actual absent voter's ballots. During the 2018 general election, there were slightly more than one million absent voter ballot applications submitted statewide. Of this amount, just over 940,000 were returned.

State funding for ballot application mailings

Recently, during general elections occurring in even-numbered years, the SOS has received funding to mail unsolicited absent voter's ballot applications to all registered voters. These mailings cost slightly more than \$1.2 million in FY 2017 for the 2016 general election and nearly \$1.4 million in FY 2019 for the 2018 general election.