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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
and Drafting

Legislative Budget
Office

S.B. 293
136th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for S.B. 293's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: As Reported by House General Government

Primary Sponsors: Sens. Gavarone and Brenner

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

Jared Cape, Budget Analyst

Highlights

Missing or inconsistent voter roll data

- County boards of elections (BOEs) will incur costs based on the number of additional confirmation and cancellation notices, provisional ballots cast, and staff hours involved with the additional work. The costs will likely be higher in the first year and lower in subsequent years.

Potentially ineligible voters

- When noncitizen voter registration records are identified, BOEs will incur indeterminate costs based on the number of additional cancellation notices sent and staff hours required to do this work.
- The Ohio Election Integrity Unit (EIU) under the Secretary of State (SOS) could incur costs for investigating and referring individuals deemed ineligible to vote to the Attorney General for prosecution. The Attorney General could also incur additional costs to investigate and, if necessary, prosecute illegal voting.

Absentee ballot deadline

- Under the bill, more absent voter's ballots may arrive after close-of-polls deadline to be counted and therefore would not be processed by boards of elections staff. If that is the case, it may lead to some staff cost savings for boards of elections.

Detailed Analysis

The bill makes changes to election law regarding proof of citizenship, voter roll maintenance, and absentee voting. These changes are detailed in the [LSC bill analysis](#). Under the

bill, county boards of elections (BOEs) and the Secretary of State (SOS) will incur additional costs to update materials, databases, and forms to comply with state election procedures and to train staff. Provisions regarding the maintenance of the Statewide Voter Registration Database (SWVRD), absentee voting, and potentially ineligible voters are described below with each provision's anticipated fiscal effects.

Missing or inconsistent voter roll data

The bill requires the SOS and BOEs to periodically review, flag, and attempt to update each voter registration record where certain information is missing or inconsistent. BOEs are required to mail notice to flagged electors. Each flagged elector will need to either update their information, vote provisionally then provide appropriate documentation, or reregister at a later date.

County boards of elections

BOEs will incur some additional costs related to increased staff time, postage for notices, and printing additional provisional ballots. Presumably, the costs would be the greatest in the first year as voter registration records are updated. In subsequent years, the cost of these changes would be lower, as BOEs will have addressed existing records with missing or inconsistent data.

For each flagged record, the bill requires BOEs to send a confirmation notice with postage prepaid, a preaddressed return envelope, and a form on which the elector may verify or correct the elector's registration. The material cost of each notice should be approximately \$1.60, including two 73¢ United States Postal Service (USPS) stamps. The costs for county boards of elections will depend on how many electors would receive these notices.

Some electors will not update their registration information as required above and will thus need to vote using a provisional ballot. The difference in cost between each provisional ballot and the standard ballot varies by the voting system used by each BOE. Overall, 48 counties use preprinted ballots costing roughly 30¢ to 40¢ per ballot, 28 counties use electronically marked and separately tabulated ballots costing approximately 11¢ per ballot, and 12 use directly recorded electronic ballots with a voter-verified paper trail costing approximately 8¢ per ballot. During the 2024 general election, there were approximately 105,000 provisional ballots cast.

Secretary of State

The SOS could incur additional costs to perform more frequent checks using information from additional databases. These costs would likely be paid from Business Services Fund (Fund 5990) line item 050629, Statewide Voter Registration Database. The methodology described in the bill to do these checks largely seems to codify existing practices under SOS directives.

Potentially ineligible voters

When the SOS determines a person is a noncitizen, the SOS will alert the appropriate BOE to cancel the person's voter registration and the SOS's Election Integrity Unit (EIU) will incur costs to conduct a further investigation regarding the person, and if necessary, forward the matter to the Attorney General. Additionally, BOEs will incur costs based on the number of additional cancellation notices sent and staff hours involved processing these cancellations.

The Attorney General could incur additional costs to investigate and, if necessary, prosecute under the penalties in the bill. For people who are improperly registered to vote, they may be found guilty of a felony of the fifth degree. If a person is found guilty of voting illegally, they could serve a prison sentence of six to 18 months and be fined up to \$5,000 for a fourth degree felony. Of the criminal penalty, \$30 is credited to the Indigent Defense Support Fund (Fund 5DY0) and \$30 is credited to the Victims of Crime/Reparations Fund (Fund 4020).

Additionally, the bill changes the statutory procedure for precinct election officials to challenge a person as a noncitizen when the person appears to vote in person. It is unclear if these changes will result in a greater number of challenges. As a result, it is possible that BOEs could issue more provisional ballots which, as noted above, may cost between 8¢ and 40¢ each depending on the voting system a BOE uses.

Cancellation notices

The bill requires BOEs to send a cancellation notice anytime they cancel a person's voter registration. As a result, BOEs will incur some new costs based on the number of additional cancellation notices sent and staff hours involved with this procedure.

Absentee ballot deadline

The bill requires most absent voter's ballots to be delivered to the appropriate board of elections, in person or by mail, by the close of the polls on Election Day in order to be counted. However, the bill maintains the current law return deadline of four days after Election Day for uniformed services and overseas absent voter's (UOCAVA) ballots. Under current law, all absent voter's ballots delivered to the board in person must meet that deadline. However, absent voter's ballots that are returned by mail are still counted if they arrive at the board of elections by the fourth day after Election Day. As a result of the new close-of-polls deadline under the bill, fewer absent voter's ballots may need to be processed. If so, there might be some minimal savings in staffing costs for boards of elections. As a point of reference, during the November 2024 election, of the 803,253 total absent voter's ballots returned by mail, 9,523 (1.2%) arrived by mail during the four days after Election Day.