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# OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research  
and Drafting

Legislative Budget  
Office

**H.B. 208**  
**135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

## **Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement**

[Click here for H.B. 208's Bill Analysis](#)

**Version:** As Introduced

**Primary Sponsor:** Rep. Hall

**Local Impact Statement Procedure Required:** No

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### **Highlights**

- County boards of elections may incur additional costs for an increase in provisional ballots and issues-only ballots in primary elections.
- The Secretary of State may incur some additional GRF and non-GRF expenses for changing the procedures for maintaining the Statewide Voter Registration Database, updating written materials and forms, and revising training for county boards of elections.

### **Detailed Analysis**

#### **Overview**

The Secretary of State and county boards of elections will need to update practices and materials to comply with the bill. Additionally, county boards of elections may incur additional costs as a result of higher than normal number of requests for provisional ballots and issues-only ballots under the closed primary system.

The bill changes Ohio's primary elections to a closed primary system, meaning that a person must be registered as affiliated with a political party in order to vote in that party's primary. Ohio's current system allows a voter to request any party's ballot at a primary so long as the person claims to be a member of that party, and there is no mechanism to change party affiliations between primary elections. The bill also makes changes to candidacy requirements and the way new political parties are formed.

#### **County boards of elections**

County boards of elections may incur additional costs for an increase in provisional ballots and issues-only ballots in primary elections. Under current law, voters who have not voted in the preceding two calendar years are considered unaffiliated. If an unaffiliated voter does not update

their registration by the deadline before an election, which is 30 days prior to the election under the bill, a voter may vote on an issues-only ballot.

The bill specifies that a voter who is registered in Ohio before the bill takes effect keeps the voter's current party affiliation as of the bill's effective date based on the voter's recent voting history. County boards of elections may experience an increase in party affiliation changes prior to a primary election resulting from the bill. According to the county boards of elections' voter registration and voter history data published on October 7, 2023, Ohio's voter affiliation breakdown is approximately as follows:

- Number of Registered Voters in Ohio: 7,969,963
- Number of Unaffiliated Registered Voters: 5,567,152
- Number of Registered Republicans: 1,372,491
- Number of Registered Democrats: 1,028,479
- Number of Registered Libertarians: 1,841

## **Secretary of State**

The bill requires the Secretary of State to change procedures for maintaining the Statewide Voter Registration Database, update written materials and forms, and revise training for county boards of elections. The additional effort to comply with the bill will likely be absorbed by existing personnel and using existing equipment, and paid through current appropriations made through GRF appropriation line item (ALI) 050321, Operating Expenses, and Fund 5990 ALI 050630, Elections Support Supplement.