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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
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Office

S.B. 51
135th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for S.B. 51's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Gavarone

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- The bill establishes the Election Integrity Division under the Secretary of State (SOS) to investigate allegations of election fraud, voter suppression, and other violations of the Election Law. Any additional staffing and operating costs would most likely be paid from the Business Services Fund (Fund 5990).
- The SOS's Public Integrity Division currently performs many of the tasks required under the bill. It has six employees who conduct election-related investigations.
- County or municipal court systems could see some additional costs for handling cases arising from investigations undertaken by the SOS's Election Integrity Division.

Detailed Analysis

The bill creates the Election Integrity Division within the Office of the Secretary of State (SOS). This new Division would be required to investigate allegations of election fraud and voter suppression, including any alleged violation of the Election Law. The bill allows the public to submit allegations of election fraud and voter suppression, and also investigate allegations on the Division's own initiative. As indicated in the [LSC bill analysis](#), the SOS currently has the authority to perform many of the duties specified in the bill, some of which are carried out by the existing Public Integrity Division. The bill, in contrast, places these responsibilities under the new Election Integrity Division.

Most of the costs SOS incurs now for overseeing elections through the Elections Division are paid from the Business Services Fund (Fund 5990). At this stage, it is unclear if SOS would need to hire new employees, or to what extent the office would need to rearrange existing staff, to carry out the work required under the bill. This makes it difficult to estimate how the bill would affect SOS's overall operating costs. In all likelihood, the Election Integrity Division would be

made up of staff from both the Elections Division and the Public Integrity Division. The most recent available information from state employment records shows the Elections Division has 25 employees. The Public Integrity Division houses an Investigations Unit with 12 employees currently on the roster. Six of the employees are campaign finance investigators who would probably carry out investigations similar to what is required under the bill.

The Election Integrity Division may also refer allegations of Election Law violations to a prosecutor, law enforcement agency, or other state or federal agency for further investigation or prosecution. Any additional investigations could result in some new prosecution and investigatory costs for political subdivisions, specifically the applicable county or municipal court system.