

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[Second Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 3819

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

DATED: JUNE 21, 2022

SUMMARY

- Synopsis:** Specifies circumstances when voter will be removed from permanent vote by mail status and when ballot will be sent to primary address; requires educational campaign; makes appropriation of \$5 million.
- Type of Impact:** One-time State expenditure increase; one-time local revenue increase; annual local cost impact.
- Agencies Affected:** Department of State, counties.

| Fiscal Impact | <u>Year 1</u> | <u>Year 2 & Thereafter</u> |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| State Cost Increase | Up to \$5 million | Indeterminate |
| Local Revenue Increase | Up to \$5 million | Indeterminate |
| Local Cost Impact | --- | Indeterminate |

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) finds the bill will result in a one-time \$5 million increase in expenditures for the State to provide grants to counties to undertake a public education campaign to notify voters of potential changes to their vote by mail status and potential changes to where their mail-in ballots are sent. These grant monies, in turn, will constitute a one-time county revenue increase.
- The cost to each county to carry out the educational campaign would depend on its implementation decisions as the bill provides options for conducting the educational campaign that vary in their cost.
- The bill will also impact annual county expenditures. When counties remove voters from the permanent vote by mail list, they will realize savings related to the printing and mailing of mail-in ballots. On the other hand, counties will be required to pay the cost of printing and distributing notices to voters who will be subject to a change in their vote by mail status or when notifying them about a change in where their ballot is sent. The net effect on annual county expenditures of these countervailing actions cannot be determined.

- There is no information available to indicate the number of voters who will receive notices about a change in their vote by mail status or a change in where their ballot is sent; thus, a specific estimate of the potential annual net cost increase or savings for the counties cannot be made at this time.

BILL DESCRIPTION

The bill would remove a voter from a permanent vote by mail status after a voter opted in if the voter does not vote by mail for four consecutive years beginning with the 2020 election cycle. The bill specifies that the voter will no longer automatically receive a mail-in ballot, and a voter will be notified in writing of their change in status after the fourth consecutive year in which they have not voted by mail. Under current law, a voter will continue to receive a mail-in ballot after opting to receive one for all future elections, until they provide notification otherwise in writing.

The bill also specifies that for a voter who chooses to have their mail-in ballot sent to an address other than the address for which they are registered to vote, the ballot will be sent to the address for which they are registered to vote if the ballot is returned or undeliverable after two consecutive general elections. The bill requires a voter to be notified in writing after the second consecutive general election when the ballot was returned or undeliverable of the change in where their ballot will be sent.

The bill also appropriates \$5 million for the purposes of providing grants to counties to undertake a public education campaign to notify voters of the changes to mail-in ballot procedures set forth in this bill.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS finds the bill will result in a one-time \$5 million increase in expenditures for the State to provide grants to counties to undertake a public education campaign to notify voters of potential changes to their vote by mail status and potential changes to where their mail-in ballots are sent. These grant monies, in turn, will constitute a one-time county revenue increase. The cost to each county to carry out the educational campaign would depend on its implementation decisions as the bill provides options for conducting the educational campaign that vary in their cost. The bill provides that the educational campaign should be conducted through existing media such as television or newspapers, through online platforms, or by mail addressed to registered voters with vote by mail status, to inform them about the potential of their removal from permanent vote by mail status and the potential change in where their mail-in ballot is sent.

The OLS concludes that when counties remove voters who have not voted by mail from the permanent vote by mail list, counties will realize savings related to the printing and mailing of mail-in ballots. The counties, however, will be required to pay the cost of distributing notices to voters who will be subject to a change in their vote by mail status, or a change to where their ballot is sent. The net effect on annual county expenditures of these countervailing actions cannot be

determined because there is no information available to indicate the number of voters who will receive notices in a given year about the change in their vote by mail status or a change of where their ballot is sent; thus, a specific estimate of the potential annual net cost increase or savings for the counties cannot be made at this time.

Section: State Government

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This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).