HB-6002
AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING AND REPORTING OF RESULTS AT THE 2020 STATE ELECTION AND ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION.

As Amended by House "A" (LCO 3767), House "D" (LCO 3802)

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 21 $	FY 22 $
Secretary of the State	FF - Cost	Approximately 2.72 million	None
Resources of the General Fund	GF - Potential Revenue Gain	Less than 5,000	None

Note: FF=Federal Funds; GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 21 $	FY 22 $
Various Municipalities	STATE MANDATE[1] - Potential Cost	See Below	See Below

Explanation

The bill makes various changes affecting absentee voting, canvassing and reporting election returns, and Election Day Registration (EDR). Specifically, the absentee voting and election return changes only apply to the November 3, 2020, state election. The bill is anticipated to result in costs to the state and potential costs to municipalities. State costs are anticipated to be supported by federal

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[1] State mandate is defined in Sec. 2-32b(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, "state mandate" means any state initiated constitutional, statutory or executive action that requires a local government to establish, expand or modify its activities in such a way as to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenues.

funds from the Coronavirus, Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.[2] Municipalities are anticipated to be eligible for CARES Act funding based on the submission of a Safe Polls Plan[3] to the Secretary of the State (SOS). The amounts and extent of such funding provided to each municipality have yet to be determined.

Section 1 expands the reasons for which an elector may vote by absentee ballot for the 2020 state election to include the sickness of COVID-19. It is anticipated there will be an increase in absentee ballot applications as a result of this provision.

Sections 2 and 3 require the absentee ballot inner envelope statement to be updated for the 2020 state election to include "the sickness of COVID-19" and allow SOS to make changes to absentee voting forms and materials. No fiscal impact is anticipated as a result of such modifications.

The bill also expands violations that constitute a false statement which results in a potential minimal revenue gain of less than $5,000 in FY 21. In FY 19 there was one violation of false statement by absentee voting, which resulted in no fines collected.

Section 4 authorizes SOS to approve and select a third-party vendor for town clerks' use in mailing absentee voting sets for the 2020 state election. It is anticipated that the use of such a vendor for the general election will cost approximately $2.72 million. This estimate includes return postage costs and is anticipated to be supported by CARES Act funding.

Section 5 permits absentee ballots to be deposited into a secure drop box for the state election in 2020. As drop boxes were ordered for absentee ballots for the primary election, no additional costs are

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[2]
https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/paymentgrants/cares/CARESAwardInstructions.pdf
[3]   https://authoring.ct.gov/-/media/SOTS/ElectionServices/2020-Voting-Plan-FINAL-DRAFT-May-2-715-PM.pdf?la=en

anticipated as a result of this provision.[4]

Additionally, this section requires municipal clerks to retrieve absentee ballots deposited to such drop boxes beginning twenty-nine days before the election and each weekday thereafter until the polls close. If said drop box is located outside of a building other than where the clerk's office is located, the clerk, or their designee, must be escorted by a police officer. No fiscal impact is anticipated as local police departments can fulfill the requirements of this provision within current resources.

Section 6 which allows town clerks more time to sort and check absentee ballots has no anticipated fiscal impact. With the anticipated increase in absentee ballots being returned to municipalities, it is unclear whether this provision will mitigate potential costs to municipalities for requiring additional absentee ballot counters or staff. In addition, it is anticipated SOS will provide funding to municipalities to help with the counting of absentee ballots. The amount of such funding provided to each municipality has yet to be determined.

Section 7, which advances the deadline by which an elector who returns a completed absentee ballot may withdraw it in order to vote in person, has no fiscal impact.

Section 8 authorizes SOS to waive any requirements regarding mandatory supervised absentee voting law at institutions for the 2020 state election. SOS must consult with the Department of Public Health Commissioner, or their designee, provide written notice to town clerks and registrars of voters in such municipalities and submit a report to the Government Administration and Elections Committee. No fiscal impact is anticipated as a result of this provision.

Section 9 requires that registrars of voters certify, in writing, EDR locations to SOS at least 31 days before the election. After reviewing

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[4] SOS ordered 200 drop boxes at a total cost of approximately $365,000, including shipping. Costs are anticipated to be supported by federal CARES Act funding.

such certification, SOS may require the registrars of voters to appoint additional election officials or alter the design or plan. Municipalities may incur costs if required to appoint additional officials or make other modifications to their plan.

The bill also allows registrars of voters to apply to SOS to designate additional EDR locations. To the extent that municipalities need to designate an additional EDR location, there could be potential associated costs, including, but not limited to: providing a polling location, hiring and training additional EDR staff, purchasing additional equipment, and hiring police.

Section 10 allows individuals who are in line at an EDR location by 8:00 p.m. to vote after completing the voter registration process and being admitted as an elector. Allowing EDR individuals in line by 8:00 p.m. to register to vote, as well as vote, may result in potential minimal costs to certain municipalities. Potential costs would depend on how many individuals are in line and available staffing levels.

Sections 11 through 15 extend various deadlines and timeframes associated with processing absentee ballots and canvassing and reporting election returns. These sections have no anticipated fiscal impact to municipalities or the state. With the anticipated increase in absentee ballots being returned to municipalities, it is unclear whether this provision will mitigate potential costs to municipalities for requiring additional absentee ballot counters or staff. In addition, it is anticipated SOS will provide funding to municipalities to help with the counting of absentee ballots. The amount of such funding provided to each municipality has yet to be determined.

House "A", which ratifies an Executive Order, has no fiscal impact.

House "D" makes clarifying changes that do not alter the fiscal impact.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would

continue into the future subject to the establishment of EDR locations, EDR individuals, and staffing levels.   The fiscal impacts identified above regarding absentee voting changes only apply to the 2020 state election, thus impacts will only be incurred in FY 21.

Sources: Secretary of the State