

OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

Legislative Office Building, Room 5200
Hartford, CT 06106 ◊ (860) 240-0200
<http://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa>

sSB-5

AN ACT CONCERNING INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABSENTEE VOTING, SAFE AND SECURE IN-PERSON VOTING, VOTER REGISTRATION AND CERTAIN OTHER CHANGES REGARDING ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 22 \$	FY 23 \$
Secretary of the State	GF - Cost	Significant	Significant

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 22 \$	FY 23 \$
Various Municipalities	Potential Cost	See Below	See Below

Explanation

This bill makes numerous changes to election and voting laws that will result in costs to the state and municipalities.

Sections 1 - 5 require DMV, voter registration agencies, and public higher education institutions to use a Secretary of the State-approved electronic system to automatically transmit voter registration applications for qualified applicants to registrars of voters unless the applicants decline to apply for admission. The cost¹ for this electronic system will depend on the technology selected and the RFP process.

Section 6 requires the Secretary of the State to develop and

^{1,2} On April 16, 2021, The Office of the Secretary of the State was allocated \$4 million on bond funds from the IT Capital Investment program for various election technology upgrades.

implement one or more systems through which she may allow individuals to submit an electronic signature to sign elections-related forms and applications, other than those for campaign finance purposes. The cost² for this electronic signature system will depend on the technology selected and the RFP process.

Section 8 designates Election Day as a legal state holiday and eliminates the designation of Lincoln's Birthday as a legal state holiday. The bill also renames Washington's Birthday to be known as Presidents' Day. The Secretary of the State would incur costs, estimated at up to \$35,000, for overtime pay for certain employees to work on Election day if it is a legal state holiday. In addition, certain municipalities may incur overtime costs for staff and police to work on Election Day.

Sections 14 - 16 make various changes affecting elections, including the forfeiture and restoration of electoral privileges for certain individuals convicted of a felony, voter registration, and polling place challengers. Under current law, an individual imprisoned for a felony regains the right to vote and accompanying electoral privileges after paying all fines and completing any required prison and parole time. The bill will result in an indeterminate revenue loss from reduced collection of criminal fines and penalties.

Section 20 allows people to apply to the Secretary of the State for an absentee ballot using either a telephonic system or an online system, both of which the secretary must establish and maintain for that purpose. In both cases, an applicant's signature must be obtained from a state or federal agency's database, or another state's voter registration database, and imported into the telephonic or online system. This will result in significant costs estimated at more than \$1 million.

Sections 21, 22 & 24 -26 make permanent certain changes affecting absentee voting procedures that were implemented for the 2020 state

election as a result of COVID-19. It permits absentee ballots to be deposited into a secure drop box for elections. As drop boxes were ordered for absentee ballots for the 2020 primary election, no additional costs are anticipated as a result of this provision. 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. Minimal costs may be incurred if town staff and local police departments cannot handle this provision with current staffing levels. The other absentee ballot voting procedure provisions are not anticipated to have a fiscal impact on the state or municipalities.

Section 28 requires municipalities and voting districts to make ballots available in a language minority group's language for primaries, elections, and referenda under certain circumstances. This provision is anticipated to result in a cost of \$30,000 to the Secretary of the State.

Sections 42 - 44 & 46 - 50 require each municipality to hold its biennial municipal election in November of odd-numbered years unless its legislative body votes by a two-thirds majority to hold the election in May of odd numbered years. After January 1, 2022, the bill authorizes any municipality holding its biennial municipal election in May to instead hold the election in November through a majority vote of its legislative body. This provision has no fiscal impact as it shifts election costs from May to November in odd-numbered years.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.