

OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

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SB-901

AN ACT EXTENDING TO JUNE 30, 2021, CHANGES
IMPLEMENTED FOR THE 2020 STATE ELECTION AS A RESULT OF
COVID-19.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

| Agency Affected | Fund-Effect | FY 22 \$ | FY 23 \$ |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Resources of the General Fund | GF - Potential Revenue Gain | Less than \$5,000 | None |
| Secretary of the State | GF - Cost | Approximately 100,000 | None |

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

| Municipalities | Effect | FY 22 \$ | FY 23 \$ |
|------------------------|--|----------|----------|
| Various Municipalities | STATE MANDATE ¹ - Potential Cost | Minimal | None |

Explanation

Section 1 expands the reasons for which an elector may vote by absentee ballot for any election, primary, or referendum occurring before July 1, 2021 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.

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.

Sections 2 and 3 require the absentee ballot inner envelope statement be updated 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 elections prior to July 1, 2021. It is anticipated that the use of such a vendor will cost approximately \$100,000.

Section 5 permits absentee ballots to be deposited into a secure drop box for elections prior to July 1, 2021. As drop boxes were ordered for absentee ballots for the 2020 primary election, no additional costs are anticipated as a result of this provision.²

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.

Section 6 allows town clerks to deliver sorted and checked absentee ballots to registrars of voters before election day to begin certain pre-counting procedures. No fiscal impact is anticipated as a result of this provision.

Sections 7 - 12 authorizes municipalities to conduct certain absentee

² SOS ordered 200 drop boxes at a total cost of approximately \$365,000, including shipping. Costs were supported by federal CARES Act funding.

ballot pre-counting procedures. No fiscal impact is anticipated as a result of these provisions.

Sections 15 - 20 extends numerous deadlines and timeframes associated with processing absentee ballots and canvassing and reports the returns. No fiscal impact is anticipated as a result of these provisions.

The Out Years

The fiscal impacts identified above regarding absentee voting changes only apply to elections and referenda prior to July 1, 2021, thus impacts will only be incurred in FY 21.