

OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

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sHB-5001

AN ACT CONCERNING ABSENTEE VOTING FOR ALL AND VARIOUS OTHER REFORMS TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTIONS.

As Amended by House "A" (LCO 4526), House "E" (LCO 4660)
House Calendar No.: 348

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

| Agency Affected | Fund-Effect | FY 27 \$ | FY 28 \$ | FY 29 \$ |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Secretary of the State | GF - Cost | 612,000 to 753,000 | 341,000 to 459,000 | 506,000 to 646,000 |
| Secretary of the State | GF - Savings | 70,000 to 150,000 | 60,000 to 125,000 | 70,000 to 150,000 |
| Elections Enforcement Commission | GF - Cost | 68,000 | 87,500 | 87,500 |
| State Comptroller - Fringe Benefits ¹ | GF - Cost | 27,000 | 36,000 | 36,000 |
| UConn | GF - Revenue Gain | See Below | See Below | See Below |
| Correction, Dept.; Judicial Department | GF - Potential Cost | See Below | See Below | See Below |
| Resources of the General Fund | GF - Potential Revenue Gain | Minimal | Minimal | Minimal |

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

| Municipalities | Effect | FY 27 \$ | FY 28 \$ | FY 29 \$ |
|----------------|--------|----------|----------|----------|
|----------------|--------|----------|----------|----------|

¹The fringe benefit costs for most state employees are budgeted centrally in accounts administered by the Comptroller. The estimated active employee fringe benefit cost associated with most personnel changes is 41.82% of payroll in FY 27.

Primary Analyst: TM
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Reviewer: JS

4/24/26

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|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| All Municipalities | STATE MANDATE ² - Cost | 824,000 to 2.5 million | 650,000 to 1.9 million | 820,000 to 2.35 million |
| All Municipalities | STATE MANDATE - Cost | Minimal | Minimal | Minimal |
| Various Municipalities | Potential Cost | See Below | See Below | See Below |
| Various Municipalities | Potential Savings | See Below | See Below | See Below |

Explanation

The bill authorizes all eligible voters to apply for and participate in elections via absentee voting, alters existing absentee ballot provisions, and establishes risk-limiting audits, among other changes. The bill results in General Fund costs of approximately \$707,000 to \$848,000 in FY 27, \$464,500 to \$582,500 in FY 28, and \$629,500 to \$769,500 in FY 29. There are additionally General Fund savings anticipated of approximately \$60,000 to \$150,000 annually beginning in FY 27.

The bill results in a revenue gain to UConn associated with new voting official training requirements, and potential fiscal impacts to the General Fund due to expanded elections-related penalties, beginning in FY 27.

The bill also results in a total cost to municipalities of \$824,000 to \$2.5 million in FY 27, \$650,000 to \$1.9 million in FY 28, and \$820,000 to \$2.35 million in FY 29, associated with the bill's absentee voting and risk-limiting audits provisions. There are additionally minimal costs to municipalities beginning in FY 27 due to the bill's voting official training requirements, and potential costs to municipalities that choose to engage in a voter participation pilot program beginning in FY 27.

Costs continue into the out years.

² 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.

State Fiscal Impacts

The state costs in the bill are primarily to the Secretary of the State (SOTS), totaling approximately \$612,000 to \$753,000 in FY 27, \$341,000 to \$459,000 in FY 28, and \$506,000 to \$646,000 in FY 29, with costs continuing into the future. These costs are associated with supporting the anticipated increase in absentee voting,³ reprinting current forms, updating the current ballot tracking system, and implementing risk-limiting audits, as described below.

The bill additionally results in aggregate savings to the state of \$70,000 to \$150,000 in FY 27, \$60,000 to \$125,000 in FY 28, and \$70,000 to \$150,000 in FY 29, with ongoing savings. This savings is associated with the elimination of the absentee ballot outer envelope and may be partially offset by the cost of adding an absentee ballot privacy sleeve.

The total state costs and savings may vary from the ranges provided above if absentee voting participation is significantly higher or lower than projected.

Expanded Absentee Voting. The bill expands absentee voting provisions (Sections 1 and 26-28), which result in a cost to the state of \$292,000 to \$433,000 in FY 27, \$184,500 to \$302,500 in FY 28, and \$194,500 to \$334,500 in FY 29, with costs continuing in the out years. The majority of these costs are to SOTS, associated with providing additional forms.⁴

SOTS will need to print additional absentee ballot materials to support the expected increase in absentee voting participation, resulting in a cost of \$72,000 to \$213,000 in FY 27, \$61,000 to \$179,000 in FY 28, and \$71,000 to \$211,000 in FY 29, with costs continuing into the out years. This cost is expected to vary annually depending on the number of electors who choose to participate via absentee ballot and the types of

³ This estimate assumes: (1) on the lower end, an increase of 10% of the participating electorate shifting to absentee voting in each town in response to the legislation; and (2) on the higher end, a shift in line with Massachusetts patterns (ranging from 24.7% to 30.9%) depending on a town's number of registered voters.

⁴ Expanded absentee voting results in costs to SOTS of \$197,000 to \$338,000 in FY 27, \$61,000 to \$179,000 in FY 28, and \$71,000 to \$211,000 in FY 29.

elections held.

The bill also allows an elector to request permanent absentee ballot application status beginning in FY 27. This provision may increase SOTS absentee ballot application costs beyond the estimates described above. The extent of the cost increase depends on the number of electors who choose this option, but in the absence of the provision, would not have opted to participate via absentee voting.

Additionally, in FY 27, there is a one-time cost of \$125,000 to SOTS to reprint approximately 1.35 million forms. Reprinting is necessary to remove existing references to the requirement to provide an excuse to participate via absentee voting.

The expansion of absentee voting also results in a cost to the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) of \$68,000⁵ and one position⁶ in FY 27, with an associated fringe cost of \$27,000, before increasing to an annual salary of \$86,000 beginning in FY 28, with ongoing other expenses of \$1,500 and an associated fringe cost of \$36,000. The position is necessary because the expansion of absentee voting is anticipated to result in an increase in SEEC investigations.

Absentee Voting Ballot Tracking. The bill requires SOTS to develop and install ballot-tracking software (Section 8), resulting in an annual cost of approximately \$75,000 beginning in FY 27. This estimate is based on a private vendor cost from another state. If SOTS chooses to integrate the United States Postal Service (USPS) tracking into the state's Centralized Voter Registration System (CVRS), costs may vary.

Absentee Voting and the Elimination of the Outer Envelope. The bill eliminates the requirement for a second envelope to be used by electors participating via absentee voting (Section 2), resulting in

⁵ The FY 27 costs reflect an October 1 start date. Costs include a salary of \$64,500 and other expenses of \$3,500.

⁶ The position is a Legal Investigator.

savings to SOTS of \$70,000 to \$150,000⁷ in FY 27, \$60,000 to \$125,000 in FY 28, and \$70,000 to \$150,000 in FY 29, with savings continuing into the out years. The exact savings will depend on the number of electors who choose to participate via absentee voting.

The above savings may be partially offset by the requirement of a privacy sleeve for absentee ballots (Section 4). This is expected to result in a cost to SOTS beginning in FY 27. The exact cost will depend on the number of electors who choose to participate via absentee voting.

Risk-Limiting Audits. The bill establishes risk-limiting audits (Sections 44 and 56), resulting in a cost to SOTS of \$340,000 in FY 27, \$205,000 in FY 28, and \$360,000 annually beginning in FY 29.

SOTS costs in FY 27 consist of two one-time costs and annual costs. One-time FY 27 costs are: (1) \$200,000 to support program development; and (2) \$15,000 for licensing to support the pilot program. The program development costs, which are paid for by SOTS but ultimately borne by the University of Connecticut Center for Voting Technology and Research, are associated with developing and testing auditing software and processes and conducting the initial audits created by the pilot program.

Annual costs are expected to be: (1) \$125,000 beginning in FY 27 for the program's ongoing maintenance and upkeep; (2) \$80,000 beginning in FY 28 to support risk-limiting audit software licensing; and (3) \$155,000 beginning in FY 29 for equipment replacement costs.

Attorney General Action on Federal Election Interference. The bill authorizes the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to seek relief to prevent election interference, resulting in no fiscal impact to the state. The OAG has the resources and expertise to meet the requirements of

⁷ This estimate assumes: (1) on the lower end, an increase of 10% of the participating electorate shifting to absentee voting in each town in response to the legislation; and (2) on the higher end, a shift in line with Massachusetts patterns (ranging from 24.7% to 30.9%) depending on a town's number of registered voters.

the bill.

Additional Penalties Imposed. The bill prohibits certain actions around the polling place or otherwise related to elections, resulting in a potential cost to the Department of Correction (DOC) and the Judicial Department, and a potential revenue gain to the General Fund, beginning in FY 27.

The bill establishes several new felonies (Sections 57-60), resulting in potential costs to DOC and the Judicial Department for incarceration or probation, and a potential revenue gain to the General Fund from fines. On average, the marginal cost to the state for incarcerating an offender for the year is \$3,300⁸ while the average marginal cost of supervision in the community is less than \$600 per year for adults and \$450 per year for juveniles.

Deputy Registrar Training and Certification. The bill requires certification and training of deputy registrars and requires municipalities to pay for such costs (Sections 63-64). This results in an annual revenue increase for the University of Connecticut⁹ (UConn), which will provide the training, beginning in FY 27. The certification process will be handled by SOTS, resulting in no fiscal impact as the agency has sufficient staff capacity to carry out its responsibilities.

Municipal Fiscal Impacts

The bill results in an estimated total cost¹⁰ to municipalities of \$824,000 to \$2.5 million in FY 27,¹¹ \$650,000 to \$1.9 million in FY 28,¹²

⁸ Inmate marginal cost is based on increased consumables (e.g., food, clothing, water, sewage, living supplies, etc.) This does not include a change in staffing costs or utility expenses because these expenses would only be realized if a unit or facility opened.

⁹ The current cost of the registrar of voters training program facilitated through the University of Connecticut School of Public Policy is \$800 per person.

¹⁰ This estimate was calculated using the vote-by-mail town costs from the [Massachusetts certified cost data](#). The Massachusetts cost data comes from the 2024 election and has been adjusted to account for size, participation, and voting patterns within each town in Connecticut.

¹¹ FY 27 includes the 2026 State Election Primary and the 2026 State Election.

¹² FY 28 includes the 2027 Municipal Primary, 2027 Municipal Election and the 2028 Presidential Preference Primary.

and \$820,000 to \$2.35 million in FY 29,¹³ with costs continuing in the out years. These costs are associated with: (1) the additional labor and materials required to support the expected increase in absentee voting; and (2) labor needed to carry out risk-limiting audits beginning in FY 27. The statewide total municipal costs may vary from the ranges provided above if absentee voting participation is significantly higher or lower than projected.

The bill additionally results in: (1) a minimal cost to towns associated with expanded election official training, beginning in FY 27; and (2) a potential cost to towns that choose to engage in a pilot program regarding voter participation, also beginning in FY 27.

Expanded Absentee Voting. The bill expands absentee voting provisions (Sections 1, 2, and 26-28), resulting in a cost to municipalities of \$800,000 to \$2.5 million in FY 27, \$650,000 to \$1.9 million in FY 28, and \$770,000 to \$2.3 million in FY 29, with costs continuing in the out years. This cost is associated with the additional labor, storage, printing, and postage needed to facilitate and process additional absentee ballots.¹⁴ The estimate is based on municipal costs incurred in Massachusetts under a similar policy, applied to Connecticut towns with comparable electorates.

The exact cost will vary substantially by town, depending on the number of registered voters, as well as on election participation and absentee-voting rates. Towns with smaller numbers¹⁵ of registered voters will generally see a significantly lower cost than in towns with higher numbers¹⁶ of registered voters.

¹³ FY 29 includes the 2028 State Election Primary and the 2028 Presidential Election.

¹⁴ This estimate assumes: (1) on the lower end, an increase of 10% of the participating electorate shifting to absentee voting in each town in response to the legislation; and (2) on the higher end, a shift in line with Massachusetts patterns (ranging from 24.7% to 30.9%) depending on a town's number of registered voters.

¹⁵ Towns with fewer than 5,000 registered voters are expected to see a cost increase of \$500 to \$1,300 in FY 27, \$500 to \$1,100 in FY 28, and \$500 to \$1,200 in FY 29.

¹⁶ Towns with greater than 50,000 registered voters are expected to see a cost increase of \$21,000 to \$59,000 in FY 27, \$15,000 to \$43,000 in FY 28, and \$22,000 to \$63,000 in FY 29.

Absentee Voting and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). As part of the absentee voting changes, the bill additionally requires municipalities to provide a secondary envelope, and, optionally, prepaid postage to support ballot access for certain electors (Section 5), resulting in a statewide cost of up to \$22,000 in FY 27 (if municipalities choose to prepay postage). Connecticut has an estimated 31,570 electors who have not previously complied with HAVA requirements to provide required identification to participate in federal elections. The exact cost will vary by town and depend on the number of such voters who choose to participate by absentee ballot.

Expand Absentee and Early Voting to Certain Electors. The bill allows eligible 17-year-olds who will be 18 by election day to participate via absentee and early voting (Section 40), resulting in a minimal cost beginning in FY 27. The exact cost will vary by town and depend on the number of qualified electors who participate via the above methods, which is expected to be minimal.

Optional Shift to Quadrennial Elections. The bill allows municipalities to shift to quadrennial elections beginning in FY 27 (Section 29), so that municipal elections coincide with existing state and federal elections, resulting in savings to municipalities. The exact savings will depend on the number of municipalities that choose to shift their municipal election dates and the amount those municipalities would have otherwise spent on municipal elections. The timing of the savings depends on when (if at all) a municipality adopts the shift.

Risk-Limiting Audits. Municipalities will incur additional labor costs statewide of approximately \$2,000¹⁷ in FY 27 and up to \$50,000¹⁸ for applicable races in FY 29 and beyond to complete risk-limiting audits (Sections 44 and 56). The bill establishes a limited pilot program in FY 27 for three municipalities, before expanding the applicability of risk-

¹⁷ This cost is the estimated maximum cost for three municipalities to complete the pilot program for State Elections in FY 27.

¹⁸ This figure represents the anticipated cost if at least one statewide/federal office in each applicable election is subject to risk-limiting audits. The actual cost is expected to be lower and will vary based on the number of races subject to risk-limiting audits.

limiting audits in FY 29. The exact cost will depend on whether a statewide race qualifies for risk-limiting audits and on the number of other races subject to them.

Deputy Registrar Training and Certification. The bill requires deputy registrars to attend required training and obtain certification at the expense of the municipality (Sections 63 and 64),¹⁹ resulting in a cost to all municipalities beginning in FY 27. The cost is dependent on the training and certification fee. The timing of the cost will be in FY 27 or FY 28 for current deputy registrars, and each time a new deputy registrar takes office, within two years of their start date.

These sections also require deputy registrars to attend two SOTS conferences annually, beginning in FY 26. This results in minimal cost to municipalities for compensating positions that attend the required conferences, expected to be less than \$200 in total per year for each town that has these positions. The compensation provided to attendees at such conferences is \$35 per day plus mileage.

Voter Participation Pilot Program. The amendment empowers municipalities to create a pilot program to achieve 100% voter participation (Section 72), resulting in a potential cost to municipalities beginning in FY 27. The exact cost will depend on the number of municipalities that choose to establish a pilot program and the components of the pilot programs.

House "A" eliminates the original bill and its associated fiscal impact, and results in the fiscal impacts described above.

House "E" makes a variety of changes, including eliminating the requirement to conduct a voter public awareness mailing and adjusting the means through which permanent absentee ballot status is obtained. The elimination of the voter public awareness mailing results reduces the bill's costs to the Secretary of the State (SOTS) by \$1.3 million in FY

¹⁹ The current cost of the registrar of voter training program facilitated through the University of Connecticut School of Public Policy is \$800 per person.

27.

The Out Years

State Impact:

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact above will continue into the future, subject to inflation, the number of electors who participate via absentee, and the number of risk-limiting audits conducted.

Municipal Impact:

Costs in the out years will vary depending on: (1) the annual number and types of elections conducted; (2) the proportion of the electorate who newly decide to participate via absentee voting; (3) inflation in postage and labor costs; and (4) the number of towns that implement a pilot program to increase voter participation.

Savings will depend on the number of municipalities that switch to quadrennial elections.

The preceding Fiscal Impact statement is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for the purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.