

# OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

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sSB-491

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE'S  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NO-  
EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING.

## **OFA Fiscal Note**

### **State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$	FY 29 \$
Secretary of the State	GF - Cost	1.55 million to 1.7 million	136,000 to 254,000	146,000 to 286,000
Secretary of the State	GF - Potential 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 <sup>1</sup>	GF - Cost	27,000	36,000	36,000

Note: GF=General Fund

### **Municipal Impact:**

Municipalities	Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$	FY 29 \$
All Municipalities	Cost	822,000 to 2.5 million	650,000 to 1.9 million	770,000 to 2.3 million
All Municipalities	Cost	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal

### **Explanation**

The bill authorizes all eligible voters to apply for and participate in

<sup>1</sup>The 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.

elections via absentee voting, and alters existing absentee ballot provisions, among other changes, beginning in FY 27. The bill results in General Fund costs of approximately \$1.65 million to \$1.8 million in FY 27, \$259,500 to \$377,500 in FY 28, and \$269,500 to \$409,500 in FY 29. There are additionally General Fund savings anticipated of approximately \$60,000 to \$150,000 annually beginning in FY 27.

The bill also results in an aggregate total cost to municipalities of \$822,000 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. Costs continue in the out years.

### **State Fiscal Impacts**

The bill's state costs are primarily to the Secretary of the State (SOTS), with SOTS costs totaling approximately \$1.55 million to \$1.7 million in FY 27, \$136,000 to \$254,000 in FY 28, and \$146,000 to \$286,000 in FY 29, with costs continuing into the out years. These costs are associated with supporting the anticipated increase in absentee voting,<sup>2</sup> reprinting current forms, updating the current ballot tracking system, and a public awareness mailing, 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 in the out years. This savings is associated with the elimination of the absentee ballot outer envelope.

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's expanded absentee voting provisions (Section 1 ) 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

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

29, with costs continuing in the out years. The majority of these costs are to SOTS, associated with providing additional forms.<sup>3</sup>

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 in 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 elections held.

The bill allows an elector to choose to permanently participate via absentee voting (Section 9), beginning in FY 27. This provision may increase the SOTS absentee ballot materials 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 for absentee voting for every election.

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 \$68,000<sup>4</sup> and one position<sup>5</sup> 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 bill's expansion of absentee voting is anticipated to result in an increase in SEEC investigations.

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<sup>3</sup> Expanded absentee voting, excluding the public information campaign and ballot tracking, 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.

<sup>4</sup> This represents 0.75 FTE in FY 27. Costs include a salary of \$64,500 and other expenses of \$3,500.

<sup>5</sup> The position is a Legal Investigator.

**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 savings to SOTS of \$70,000 to \$150,000<sup>6</sup> in FY 27, \$60,000 to \$125,000 in FY 28, and \$70,000 to \$150,000 in FY 29, with savings continued into the out years. The exact savings will depend on the number of electors who choose to participate via absentee voting.

**Public Awareness Mailing.** The bill requires SOTS to conduct a statewide public awareness mailing to educate the public regarding the bill's absentee voting provisions (Section 9). This results in a one-time cost to SOTS of \$1.3 million<sup>7</sup> in FY 27.

### **Municipal Fiscal Impacts**

The bill results in an estimated total cost<sup>8</sup> to municipalities of \$822,000 to \$2.5 million in FY 27,<sup>9</sup> \$650,000 to \$1.9 million in FY 28,<sup>10</sup> and \$770,000 to \$2.3 million in FY 29,<sup>11</sup> with costs continuing in the out years. These

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> This figure is based on the USPS standard media mail rate. This cost also includes the initial printing of the mailing, postage, and printing additional copies for town clerks to include with absentee ballot applications.

<sup>8</sup> This estimate was calculated using 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.

<sup>9</sup> FY 27 includes the 2026 State Election Primary and the 2026 State Election.

<sup>10</sup> FY 28 includes the 2027 Municipal Primary, 2027 Municipal Election and the 2028 Presidential Preference Primary.

<sup>11</sup> FY 29 includes the 2028 State Election Primary and the 2028 Presidential Election.

costs are primarily associated with the additional labor and materials required to support the expected increase in absentee voting. The statewide total municipal costs may vary from the ranges provided above if absentee voting participation is significantly higher or lower than projected.

**Expanded Absentee Voting.** The bill's expanded absentee voting provisions (Section 1) result 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.<sup>12</sup> 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 numbers<sup>13</sup> of registered voters will generally see a significantly lower cost than towns with higher numbers<sup>14</sup> of registered voters.

**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

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<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

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.

### ***The Out Years***

#### ***State Impact:***

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact above will continue into the future subject to inflation and the number of electors who participate via absentee.

#### ***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; and (3) inflation in postage and labor costs.