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.

AMENDMENT

LCO No.: 4526
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OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 27 $	FY 28 $	FY 29 $
Secretary of the State	GF - Cost	1.9 million to 2.05 million	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
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
UConn	GF - Revenue Gain	See Below	See Below	See Below

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 27 $	FY 28 $	FY 29 $

[1]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.

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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 amendment strikes the underlying bill and its associated fiscal impacts. The amendment results in the fiscal impacts described below.

The amendment 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 amendment results in General Fund costs of approximately $2 million to $2.15 million 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 amendment 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 amendment's absentee voting and risk-limiting audits provisions. There are additionally minimal costs to municipalities beginning in FY 27 due to the amendment's voting official training requirements.

Costs continue into the out years.

State Fiscal Impacts

[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.

The state costs in the amendment are primarily to the Secretary of the State (SOTS), totaling approximately $1.9 million to $2.05 million 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 amendment 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.

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 amendment 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 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 in 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 amendment also allows an elector to permanently participate

[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, excluding the public information campaign, 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.

through 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.

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 $68,000[5] and one position[6] 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 amendment 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 amendment 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[7] in FY 27, $60,000 to $125,000 in FY 28, and $70,000 to $150,000 in FY 29, with savings continuing into

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[5] This represents 0.75 FTE in FY 27. Costs include a salary of $64,500 and other expenses of $3,500.

[6] The position is a Legal Investigator.

[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 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.

Public Awareness Mailing. The amendment makes a variety of changes to election law and processes, primarily the absentee voting expansion, resulting in a one-time cost to SOTS of $1.3 million[8] in FY 27 to conduct a statewide voter mailing, which is required by Section 9.

Risk-Limiting Audits. The amendment 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 amendment authorizes the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to seek relief to prevent election interference, resulting in no fiscal impact to the

[8] This is based on the USPS standard media mail rate. This cost also includes the initial printing of the mailing, postage, and printing additional copies of that mailing to town clerks to include with absentee ballot applications.

state. The OAG has the resources and expertise to meet the requirements of the amendment.

Additional Penalties Imposed. The amendment 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 amendment 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 $3,300[9]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 amendment 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 Connecticut[10] (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 amendment results in an estimated total cost[11] to municipalities

[9] 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.
[10] The current cost of the registrar of voters training program facilitated through the University of Connecticut School of Public Policy is $800 per person.
[11] 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.

of $824,000 to $2.5 million in FY 27,[12] $650,000 to $1.9 million in FY 28,[13] and $820,000 to $2.35 million in FY 29,[14] 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 amendment 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 amendment 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.[15] 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[16] of registered voters will generally see a significantly lower cost than in towns with

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[12] FY 27 includes the 2026 State Election Primary and the 2026 State Election.
[13] FY 28 includes the 2027 Municipal Primary, 2027 Municipal Election and the 2028 Presidential Preference Primary.
[14] FY 29 includes the 2028 State Election Primary and the 2028 Presidential Election.
[15] 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.
[16] 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.

higher numbers[17] of registered voters.

Absentee Voting and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). As part of the absentee voting changes, the amendment 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 amendment 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 amendment 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

[17] 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.

costs statewide of approximately $2,000[18] in FY 27 and up to $50,000[19] for applicable races in FY 29 and beyond to complete risk-limiting audits (Sections 44 and 56). The amendment establishes a limited pilot program in FY 27 for three municipalities, before expanding the applicability of RLA 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 amendment requires deputy registrars to attend required training and obtain certification at the expense of the municipality (Sections 63 and 64),[20] 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 and the municipal clerk, or the assistant municipal clerk, 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 $300 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.

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

[19] 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.

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

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.