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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
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Office

H.B. 609
135th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 609's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Hillyer and Holmes

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- The Ohio Elections Commission (ELC) would incur costs to investigate and enforce the campaign finance prohibitions pertaining to foreign national contributions established in the bill. County prosecutors would also incur costs for prosecuting cases referred by the ELC.
- The ELC could recoup part or all of its costs for investigating these cases through fines collected as a result of the campaign finance violations established in the bill. The fine for each infraction is three times the amount involved or \$10,000, whichever is greater, and would be paid to the Ohio Elections Commission Fund (Fund 4P20).
- The bill declares an emergency and would therefore go into immediate effect.

Detailed Analysis

The bill modifies campaign finance law to prohibit contributions from foreign nationals used for influence in a statewide initiative or referendum. As a result, the Ohio Elections Commission (ELC) could incur costs to investigate and enforce the campaign finance prohibitions established under the bill. The magnitude of any such costs are uncertain and would presumably be in proportion to the frequency and complexity of potential campaign finance violations arising from the bill. The ELC could partially or fully offset the costs through fines collected as a result of these campaign finance violations. Much like any new investigative costs from the bill, any fine revenue collected is also uncertain, and will likewise depend on the frequency and dollar amount of campaign finance violations. The fine for each infraction under this bill is three times the amount involved or \$10,000, whichever is greater. The fines would be deposited into the Ohio Elections Commission Fund (Fund 4P20).

As with the ELC, the costs that county prosecutors would incur for prosecuting these cases will depend on the frequency and complexity of the cases referred. In addition to the above prohibitions, the bill retains existing law penalties for violating the law regarding contributions and expenditures by foreign nationals, including for the Secretary of State to direct a violator to return the contribution to the foreign national in addition to paying the fine levied.

The bill declares an emergency. Therefore, the changes to campaign finance law contained within would go into immediate effect upon enactment. On June 2, 2024, the Governor signed H.B. 1, which was passed in a Special Session of the 135th General Assembly. H.B. 1 contains provisions that prohibit contributions from foreign nationals used for influence in a statewide initiative or referendum that mostly mirror those contained in this bill.