



Ohio Legislative Service Commission

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Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

Bill: S.B. 63 of the 131st G.A.

Date: June 15, 2015

Status: As Introduced

Sponsor: Sen. LaRose

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

Contents: Requires the Secretary of State to establish a secure online process for voter registration and makes other changes

State Fiscal Highlights

- The Secretary of State will incur some new IT costs for adding the online voter registration feature to the current Statewide Voter Registration Database. The database is maintained in-house. These costs are paid from GRF appropriation item 050321, Operating Expenses.
- The Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, is responsible for verifying any online voter registration requests. According to a March 2010 report by the Pew Center for the States concerning online voter registration systems in Arizona and Washington, the estimated cost of processing paper registrations was 83 cents versus approximately three cents for online registration requests.

Local Fiscal Highlights

- The bill may reduce voter registration processing costs for county boards of elections, which must currently process voter registration applications in paper form. Ultimately, any savings would (1) depend on the number of additional applications that would be received electronically versus in paper form, and (2) the extent of any costs boards of elections would incur for notifying applicants that information they have supplied on their online voter applications cannot be confirmed with Bureau of Motor Vehicles records.

Detailed Fiscal Analysis

Overview

The bill requires the Secretary of State, by rule, to establish a secure online process for voter registration that allows an applicant who possesses a current and valid Ohio driver's license or identification card to submit an application to register to vote or to update the applicant's name, address, or both. The bill also requires the Secretary of State to obtain an electronic copy of the applicant's signature that is on file with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, to be used as the applicant's signature on voter registration records. Currently, there are 20 states that have implemented online voter registration and another seven states have passed legislation to begin full online voter registrations, but have yet to implement it.¹ The Secretary of State could incur some new IT costs for adding the online voter registration feature to the current Statewide Voter Registration Database and for complying with the data-sharing requirements. The database is maintained in-house. These costs are paid from GRF appropriation item 050321, Operating Expenses, which is appropriated \$2.1 million in both FY 2016 and FY 2017 under H.B. 64, the pending main operating budget bill. It is also possible that voter registration processing costs for county boards of elections will be reduced. The fiscal effects of the bill are described in more detail below.

Online voter registration applications

As noted above, the bill requires the Secretary of State to establish a secure online process for voter registration. The bill specifies that the applicant must provide specific information, must be qualified to register to vote, and must attest to the truth and accuracy of the information submitted in the application under penalty of election falsification, the penalty for which is a maximum sentence of 12 months in jail and a fine of \$2,500. Under the bill, when an individual uses the online system to register to vote, or to update the individual's registration, the information provided on the application must not be inconsistent with the information on file with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. The bill further requires the Secretary of State to employ whatever security measures are considered to be necessary to implement this system. Finally, the bill specifies that the online voter registration process must be in operation and available for use not later than the first day of July occurring not fewer than 120 days after the bill's effective date.

¹ <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/electronic-or-online-voter-registration.aspx>

Overall, the costs of verifying online voter registrations would likely be less expensive than processing paper registrations, with a consequent reduction in costs for the Secretary of State and, when applicable, county boards of elections. Although precise cost comparisons between paper registration and online registrations are not available, according to a 2010 case study conducted by the Pew Center for the States, the costs of processing paper voter registrations in Arizona and Washington was approximately 83 cents. The cost for processing online registrations was approximately three cents.²

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² The Pew Center report may be accessed online at <http://www.pewstates.org/research/reports/online-voter-registration-85899378469>.