



Ohio Legislative Service Commission

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Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

Bill: [S.B. 200 of the 130th G.A.](#)

Date: October 16, 2013

Status: As Introduced

Sponsor: Sen. Uecker

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

Contents: Modifies the law pertaining to the statewide voter registration database

State Fiscal Highlights

- The bill makes several modifications to the law pertaining to the statewide voter registration database. The data-sharing requirements of the bill could result in increased costs to the Elections Division within the Secretary of State's Office if any hardware or software upgrades to the statewide voter registration database are required. The database is managed in-house.
- Costs for the statewide voter registration database are covered by appropriations under GRF line item 050321, Operating Expenses.

Local Fiscal Highlights

- The bill requires county boards of elections to notify voters in cases where information provided by certain state agencies conflicts with information contained in the statewide voter registration database. This could result in some increased costs depending on the number of conflicts that are found and the rules established by the Secretary of State concerning the type of notification to be used.

Detailed Fiscal Analysis

Overview

The bill makes several changes to the law pertaining to the management of the statewide voter registration database. These changes include general maintenance requirements, as well as required data sharing among state agencies and data sharing with other states. The Elections Division within the Secretary of State's Office is responsible for overseeing the statewide voter registration database. Although the primary source of funding for the database is GRF appropriation item 050321, Operating Expenses, any particular costs associated with conforming the system to the requirements of the federal Help America Vote Act would be covered under Federal Special Revenue appropriation item 050616, Help America Vote Act. The provisions of the bill and the potential fiscal impacts are detailed below.

Data-sharing requirements

Under the bill, state agencies, including the Department of Health, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Job and Family Services, and the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, must provide any information and data to the Secretary of State that the Secretary of State considers necessary to maintain the statewide voter registration database, except where prohibited by federal law or regulation. The bill requires the Secretary of State to ensure that any information or data that are confidential while in possession of the entity providing the data remains confidential while in the Secretary of State's possession. The Secretary of State currently exchanges such information with the Department of Health and Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

The bill also requires the Secretary of State to adopt rules establishing a uniform method for addressing instances in which records contained in the statewide voter registration database do not conform with records maintained by a state agency. If the information a state agency provides conflicts with that elector's record in the statewide voter registration database and the discrepancy would affect the elector's eligibility to vote, the bill requires a board of elections to contact a registered elector pursuant to those rules to verify the accuracy of the information in the statewide voter registration database. There could be some additional costs to county boards of elections if they are required to contact voters concerning any such discrepancies. This would be the case if, for example, county boards would be required to make these notifications by mail. However, there could be less costly notification procedures put in place since the bill requires that the Secretary of State establish the method of contacting for voters in these circumstances by rule.

The bill also requires the Secretary of State to enter into agreements to share information or data with other states or groups of states, as the Secretary of State considers necessary, in order to maintain the statewide voter registration database. The Secretary of State must ensure that any confidential information or data provided to the

Secretary of State under this program remains confidential while in the Secretary of State's possession. However, under the bill, the Secretary of State may provide such otherwise confidential information or data to persons or organizations that are engaging in legitimate governmental purposes related to the maintenance of the statewide voter registration database.

The overall fiscal impact of these data-sharing provisions on the Elections Division within the Secretary of State's Office is uncertain. The database is managed and operated in-house. As a result, any upgrades resulting from the data-sharing requirements of the bill would be completed by existing staff. The cost of any necessary upgrades to current system hardware or software will depend on the total amount of additional data that would be exchanged between state agencies and other states under the bill. The costs for maintaining the system are paid for from two sources. The first is GRF appropriation item 050321, Operating Expenses, which is appropriated \$2.1 million in both FY 2014 and FY 2015. The second source of funding for the statewide voter registration database is Federal Special Revenue item 050616, Help America Vote Act, which is appropriated \$1.7 million in both FY 2014 and FY 2015. A portion of this line item is used to pay for any voter registration database upgrades associated with requirements of the Help America Vote Act.

Change of address and death notice updates

The bill increases the frequency in which the Secretary of State must send each county board of elections' voter registration records to the U.S. Postal Service's National Change of Address Service. The bill also requires the Ohio Department of Health to file monthly reports with the Secretary of State of persons who have died that month. Currently, both the Secretary of State and Department of Health are carrying out these functions as prescribed by the bill. Consequently, there is no additional cost associated with these provisions.

Other provisions

The bill makes other general modifications to the statewide voter registration database. Specifically, the bill allows the Secretary of State to prescribe, by rule, the way in which county boards of elections send information to the Secretary of State for purposes of maintaining the database. It is unclear as to whether this provision has any fiscal impact as it will ultimately depend on the rules adopted by the Secretary of State. However, it would appear to be unlikely that any such rules would have a fiscal impact on county boards of elections. The bill also removes restrictions as to what information is available on the voter registration database. Under current law, only an elector's name, address, precinct number, and voting history must be made available on the statewide voter registration database web site. By eliminating the word "only," the bill allows for additional information to be included on the web site. However, there is no requirement that any additional information be made available. There does not appear to be any fiscal impact as a result of this change.