

Fiscal Note

BILL # SB 1629

TITLE: registration; verification; images; audits; boxes

SPONSOR: Borrelli

STATUS: As Amended by Senate GOV

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Description

The bill would implement a variety of election-related requirements, including: election integrity audits by the Auditor General (OAG); public posting of digital ballot images; registration of voter registration collectors with the Secretary of State (SOS); additional processes for the maintenance of voter lists; and signature verification training.

Estimated Impact

We estimate that the bill would have 2 main General Fund costs:

- Auditor General Election Integrity Audits: 35 FTE positions and \$4.5 million on an ongoing basis, and
- Digital Ballot Database: We do not have a cost estimate currently. The SOS is working to determine a potential cost.

The SOS would also incur costs associated with signature training verification and voter registration collector requirements.

The Arizona Association of Counties (AACo) projects potential additional mail costs to counties as a result of the bill's provision related to voter list maintenance, but did not quantify the impact.

Analysis

The bill would implement the following election-related changes:

- 1) Digital Ballot Database – The SOS would be required to provide a public online database containing a digital copy/image of each tabulated ballot for primary, general, and special elections with federal races. The bill appropriates an unspecified amount to the SOS to maintain a ballot image portal. This provision is unlikely to have a county cost, as AACo indicates the election management systems in all 15 counties have the capability to produce these images, and the images are already captured in the regular course of tabulation.

SOS believes this provision will have a fiscal impact to create a central database to store the ballot images produced by the counties. However, given the uncertainty of the technology to be used, SOS is still researching the cost of hosting the database at the state level. SOS is aware of a potentially comparable system in Pueblo County, Colorado. We contacted Pueblo County about the cost of their system but have not received a response.

- 2) Signature Training Verification – The SOS would be required to either create a training module or develop and administer signature verification training for elections officers.

The department estimates a General Fund cost of \$15,000 every other year, based on a similar training for counties in 2020.

(Continued)



- 3) Voter Registration Collector Requirements – Certain voter registration collectors, both paid and unpaid, would be required to register with the SOS.

The SOS reports that the bill would have a fiscal impact related to the registration of voter registration collectors. While the department has not yet quantified the cost of registering voter registration collectors, it expects there would be additional IT costs associated with creating a registration system.

- 4) Election Integrity Audits – The OAG would be required to establish an audit team for 2 election integrity audits of county recorders' offices and county elections departments on a random basis each federal election cycle. In addition to these 2 audits, both Maricopa and Pima Counties would be audited each election cycle.

The bill appropriates \$4.6 million and 35.25 FTE in FY 2023 for this provision. In the second year and beyond, the OAG estimates the bill would cost \$4.5 million, which would include 35 FTE.

- 5) Address-Related Voter Registration Notifications – Under current law, most election materials are mailed as "nonforwardable" and if undelivered, an elector is sent a mailing to update their voter registration information. The bill would establish a separate notification process, where county recorders would identify registrants whose address may have changed using information directly provided by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS).

In terms of the bill's provisions to authorize additional address-related voter registration mailings, AACo indicates that counties generally perform these types of mailings already. However, AACo anticipates an additional cost for counties that do not currently subscribe to the USPS National Change of Address service, which would be used to perform the new address-related checks. The potential subscription cost would be based on a variety of factors, including the number of registered voters in the county and a county's current subscription with the USPS for other services.

Local Government Impact

See above.

2/23/22