

# JLBC Fiscal Note

**BILL #** SCR 1001

**TITLE:** citizenship; identification; contributions; early voting

**SPONSOR:** Bolick

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**STATUS:** Senate Engrossed

## Description

The measure, if passed by voters, would alter election administration by ending all early voting at 7 P.M. on the Friday before the election (excluding early ballots returned through the U.S. Postal Service) and require a voter to make an affirmative request for a mail-in ballot prior to each election cycle.

The state currently pays the cost of distributing sample ballots to certain registered voters. In general, local governments otherwise pay the cost of administering elections, including the cost of the actual ballots, sending ballots to mail-voters, and counting all election ballots. The state and local governments share in the cost of maintaining the state's voter registration database, which among other functions, tracks a voter's selection for requesting a mail-in ballot.

## Estimated Impact

We estimate the resolution, if passed by voters, could have fiscal impacts that both increase and decrease the cost of election administration. Given the general distribution of election functions, most of the fiscal impact would occur at the county level.

We cannot determine the measure's overall fiscal impact on election administration because changes in the levels of specific voting methods or voter turnout overall would likely be the most significant contributor in determining whether the measure would result in a net cost increase or decrease for state and local governments. We are unaware of information that would allow us to predict how the resolution would affect the level of voting. In addition, any operational costs to implement the measure's requirements are subject to further action by state and local governments.

We received input from the Secretary of State's office, the Arizona Association of Counties, and the League of Cities and Towns on the resolution's potential fiscal impact. While each respondent broadly commented on the potential impacts, none provided a specific estimated cost or savings amount. (*See the Other Comments section below*).

## Analysis

The resolution could affect state and local government costs by:

- 1) Affecting the number of voters who choose to vote in-person or by mail-in ballot. This fiscal impact would generally depend on the magnitude of any change – for example, a minor shift from mail-in balloting may reduce postage costs and not generate substantive in-person voting costs such as adding new polling places. In contrast, a substantial shift to in-person voting may generate new polling place operational costs that outweigh the associated mail-in ballot savings. Based on prior data provided by counties, we estimate a cost for each new precinct of: \$2,700 per precinct for each election day for staffing/operational costs and \$8,000 in one-time equipment costs.
- 2) Eliminating certain in-person voting which currently occurs on the weekend prior to the election day (often known as "emergency voting"). This would reduce county in-person election costs.
- 3) Requiring additional workload to establish a process by which voters must make an affirmative request confirming their mailing address prior to each biennial election to vote by mail. Under current law, voters generally remain on the mail-in voting list until removal after a specified timeframe of voting inactivity.
- 4) Requiring updates to the state voter registration system and other state/county information technology systems to account for various election administration changes.

## Other Comments

The Arizona Association of Counties indicated that the impact would depend on the implementation of mail-in voter address verification and other process changes proposed by the resolution. The League of Arizona Cities and Towns reported that the fiscal impact to a city would depend on if the measure were to increase county costs, as city election costs are paid through an intergovernmental agreement with their respective county. The Secretary of State estimated one-time costs for modifying the state voter registration database system to align with the measure and the agency also reported the potential for litigation costs.