

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

GAB 3/11/2010

LRB Number	09-4101/1	Introduction Number	AB-0814	Estimate Type	Original
Description An optional identification requirement for voting in elections					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

Government Accountability Board, Election Administration Division

Fiscal Analysis – 2009 Assembly Bill 814

A Bill Relating to an Optional Identification Requirement for Voting

Background

Currently, a registered elector, upon offering to vote must provide his or her name and address. If the voter is not registered, a registration application must be completed and proof of residence must be provided. If proof of residence cannot be provided, another qualified elector of the municipality may corroborate the residency of the elector. A first-time Wisconsin voter registering by mail must provide proof of residence before being permitted to vote. If a first-time voter registering by mail cannot provide proof of residence and cannot register on election day using a corroborator, he or she may vote provisionally. A provisional ballot will be counted only if the elector can produce acceptable proof of residence no later than 4:00 p.m. the day following the election.

LRB Summary

2009 Assembly Bill 814 permits an elector, at the time of registration, to choose to be required to provide identification (I.D.) in order to vote in an election. The bill also permits a registered elector to agree to be required to provide I.D. in order to vote. An elector who has agreed to the ID requirement, but is unable to provide I.D. at the time of voting, would be permitted to vote provisionally. An election to this requirement may be revoked. The following is an analysis of the fiscal and workload impact of the passage of this Act on the Election Administration Division (the Division) and, particularly, on training of municipal clerks and election inspectors.

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

A. This legislation requires analysis of significant changes to election law and will also necessitate the promulgation of administrative rules to enforce the proposed statutory changes.

This legislation requires statutory analysis and rule-making enforcement of the proposed statutory changes concerning the management of voters who have elected to be subject to the I.D. requirement, revocation of such election, communication to election-day workers as to which voters are subject to the I.D. requirement and the treatment of those voters. This legislation would compel the agency's two full-time staff attorneys to perform more statutory analysis and rule-making to flesh out the procedures and intricacies associated with the requirements of the legislation. Considering the administrative burden currently imposed on the two attorneys, the addition of a support person dedicated to assisting in legislative analysis and the rule-making process would alleviate current workload and ensure that the requirements of the legislation are met.

B. This legislation effectively reverses a provision of 2005 Act 451 which consolidated what were previously two lists: "I.D." (required of first-time voters registering by mail) and "Proof of Residence" (required of voters registering after the close of registration and on election day). This legislation reverts to a differentiation between I.D. and proof of residence, but for an entirely different purpose. This legislation also adds a third acceptable reason for voting provisionally. This legislation adds another dimension to clerk and election official training.

2009 AB 814 not only requires revision of forms and manuals, but also training materials and training programs for municipal clerks and, more directly, the election inspectors who "man" the polling place on election day. Training of election officials will need to be stepped up in order to impress upon election officials that "I.D." is not necessarily proof of residence and is used for an entirely different purpose than proof of residence. Where there was one "Proof of Residence" list, there is now also an "I.D." list. Where there were once only two acceptable reasons for voting provisionally, there will now be three.

The average age of election inspectors in Wisconsin is approximately 65. For the most part, this generation carries the voting process. Election inspectors are the players in the process who are forced to comply with the ongoing changes, wrinkles and layers in the election process. Since 2001, the role of an inspector has changed dramatically and has, to some, become overwhelming, burdensome and not worth the ever-increasing stress. Although these civic-minded people are diligent and protective of the role they play in election administration and they take their duties very seriously, they are sometimes resistant to change and reticent about learning new rules and regulations. The ever-increasing complexity of the duties Election Inspectors are asked to know, sort out, understand and keep straight continues to become more complicated, convoluted and difficult to teach.

The Division currently employs two full-time GPR Elections Specialists and two Project Elections Specialist whose in-office duties are substantial but are also required to do on-the-road training of municipal clerks and election inspectors. This legislation will increase the number of topics to be covered in training, and increase the volume of training required to indoctrinate all election officials. The addition of another Project Elections Specialist whose focus is training would help to cover the ever-expanding role the Division plays in the training of election officials and ensure that continuing legislative revisions are adapted timely and that documents remain current.

C. This legislation will require the registration list to indicate which electors have chosen to be subject to the requirement to provide I.D. before voting.

The registration list generated from the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) will need to be modified to alert the inspectors to those persons who have agreed to be subject to the requirement to provide I.D. Inspectors will need to be aware of which registered electors who previously only had to announce their name and address in order to vote, must now be required to produce acceptable I.D., or vote provisionally if the document cannot be provided. This introduces another scenario in which provisionally voting is acceptable.

D. This legislation requires the Division to perform a wholesale revision of election administration forms, manuals and other documents, as well as revisions to training materials and programs to reflect a new wrinkle in already-complex procedures. Two new forms will also need to be developed: "Election to be Required to Provide I.D. Before Voting," and "Revocation of Election to be Required to Provide I.D. Before Voting." For a list of documents requiring revision, please see the addendum.

E. Cost Estimates

1. Staff:

Hrly. Salary Hours FTE Ann. Salary Fringe Benefits

One add. Project Elec. Spec: \$22.00 2080 \$45,760 \$19,906

On add. Admin. Support: \$13.69 1,080 \$28,484 \$12,390

Total annual cost of salaries and benefits: \$74,244 \$32,296

2. Creation and Revision of forms, manuals and training materials

Revision and reproduction and distribution of existing forms: \$ 2,000

Revision, reproduction and distribution of four manuals \$ 66,000

Creation of and reproduction of at least two new forms: \$ 1,000

Total document cost: \$ 69,000

3. Modification of SVRS System: \$200,000

4. Local government will incur costs for printing new forms, entering information into the SVRS to track those voters wishing to avail themselves of this voting option, additional record maintenance, developing training materials or incorporating G.A.B. prepared materials into required training sessions and training poll workers.

Conclusion

The Act would add additional cost and complexity to an already overly complex process. Clerks and election inspectors currently struggle to sort out and understand the continually evolving intricacies of registering to vote and the voting process in general. The legislation proposes to demand that Division staff incorporate another layer of bureaucracy that would not only affect municipal and county clerks but, more importantly, the good citizens who agree to be election-day workers. This Act would weigh heavily on the election administrators charged with and expected to apply this legislation. Whether this Act accomplishes anything toward voter confidence is dubious at best.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications

Personnel and Fringe Benefit costs would be ongoing. Technical changes that have to be made to the Statewide Voter Registration System would be a one-time costs.