

Fiscal Estimate - 2019 Session

Original
 Updated
 Corrected
 Supplemental

LRB Number 19-3465/1	Introduction Number SB-293
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Description
 automatic voter registration and the integration of registration information with information maintained by the Department of Transportation and other state agencies and granting rule-making authority

Fiscal Effect

State:

No State Fiscal Effect
 Indeterminate

<input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> Create New Appropriations	<input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Revenues <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Revenues	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs - May be possible to absorb within agency's budget <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs
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Local:

No Local Government Costs
 Indeterminate

1. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory	3. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory	5. Types of Local Government Units Affected <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Towns <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Village <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Counties <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/> School Districts <input type="checkbox"/> WTCS Districts
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Fund Sources Affected	Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GPR <input type="checkbox"/> FED <input type="checkbox"/> PRO <input type="checkbox"/> PRS <input type="checkbox"/> SEG <input type="checkbox"/> SEGS	

Agency/Prepared By ELEC/ Richard Rydecki (608) 261-2015	Authorized Signature Meagan Wolfe (608) 266-8175	Date 10/4/2019
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Fiscal Estimate Narratives
ELEC 10/4/2019

LRB Number	19-3465/1	Introduction Number	SB-293	Estimate Type	Original
Description automatic voter registration and the integration of registration information with information maintained by the Department of Transportation and other state agencies and granting rule-making authority					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

Under current law, voter registration is initiated by voters through a process administered by municipal election officials or online through the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) online voter registration portal. The bill requires the WEC to use all feasible means to facilitate the registration of all eligible electors and to maintain the registration of all eligible electors for so long as they remain. The bill creates a new program area for WEC staff to facilitate, with the WEC assuming a role similar to a municipal clerk's office in registering voters, following up on discrepancies, sending out various communications to voters, and other functions previously reserved to local election officials. While the WEC maintains the statewide voter registration system/list (WisVote), WEC does not currently perform voter registration functions carried out by municipal and county clerks under Wis. Stat. §§ 7.10, 7.15, 6.28, 6.29, 6.30, 6.32 and 6.33.

The bill extends voter registration opportunities to Wisconsin citizens when completing transactions at the Wisconsin Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) such as a vehicle registration or a driver license application. Eligible voters who complete a transaction at the DMV will automatically registered to vote unless they choose to "opt-out." Voter registration information collected by the DMV for AVR purposes would then be transmitted to the WEC. Without working out the details with DOT (MOU and technical discussions with IT staff from both agencies), the WEC must make some assumptions as to how the transfer of voter data would be facilitated. It is assumed that the WEC would upload DMV AVR data into the statewide voter registration system, WisVote, as a pending registration record for approval by the appropriate municipal clerk. Once the pending voter registration is approved, it is assumed that the WEC would use the existing practice of sending a voter verification postcard to the newly registered voter, however the bill requires more information be provided to the voter, and it is referred to as a "notice." Under the bill, the notice would also need to be provided in English and at least Spanish. It is unlikely that the information that must appear on the notice would fit on a postcard, therefore the notice may need to be larger and at a greater cost than the current postcards that are sent. For purposes of this estimate, the WEC will use the current postcard rate, but the cost could be higher if the required information cannot fit on a postcard.

It is assumed that some of the existing code and business processes involved Online Voter Registration (OVR) may be replicated to implement AVR, although AVR requires the actual transfer of data, whereas OVR is a match and verify process which from an IT perspective, is much different. The amount and type of development required is unknown at this time.

The bill requires the WEC to reach out to voters that appear to be eligible to register to vote, but currently are not. This is similar to the "Eligible but Unregistered" (EBU) mailing that the WEC has previously sent to voters as part of the WEC's responsibilities under the ERIC program. It is assumed that the costs associated with sending the EBU mailing would be similar to the costs associated with this requirement under the bill.

If discrepancies between the information obtained from the DOT and other information the WEC has for a voter, the bill requires the WEC to contact the voter to resolve discrepancies. The bill allows the WEC to contact the voter by mail, phone or in person. It is assumed that the WEC would only be contacting voters by mail or telephone if the voter's information is available. It would not be feasible to contact voters "in person" and therefore this estimate does not include potential costs for this type of contact. It is assumed that some IT development and testing would be required to facilitate this section of the bill in addition to voter mailing costs asking voters to contact the WEC to resolve a discrepancy found between information provided to the DOT and the WEC. It is assumed that the discrepancy mailing could be in the form of a postcard.

The largest unknown is how the WEC would facilitate receipt of a "copy of the document that the applicant [DOT] provided as proof of citizenship and a statement from the department of transportation indicating that the department verified the applicant's citizenship." The current WisVote system does not contain capabilities to store external documents associated with a voter's registration record. Additionally, the responsibility to store such a sensitive document somehow within the WisVote system or some other secure location linked to the WisVote system would be a separate, expensive IT project for the WEC. Without extensive research and potentially competitive bidding to find a solution, the WEC IT staff is unable to accurately estimate the cost of the IT solution needed to implement this section of the bill.

The bill requires the WEC to facilitate the removal of a voter's record from WisVote if the WEC is contacted by the voter. Under the bill, the WEC is then prohibited from continuing to contact the individual, even if they appear to be eligible. It is assumed that some IT changes to WisVote would be needed to flag individuals for deletion from the WisVote system to comply with this section of the bill.

The WEC previously prepared a fiscal estimate on LRB: 17-4289/2017 AB609 that implemented AVR in this state. As outlined below, the estimated costs are significantly higher than the previous fiscal estimate provided on this topic.

It is assumed that the fiscal impact on the WEC to implement the AVR provisions contained in this bill, would fall into the following categories:

IT WisVote Development. Cost: \$32,300 (340 hours of IT development X \$95 per hour average cost)*

IT WisVote Mailing Development and Report Development for Resolving Discrepancies. Cost: \$7,600 (80 hours of IT development X \$95 per our average cost)

WEC Staff Testing of IT Development. Cost: \$10,752 (320 hours of WEC staff testing X \$33.60)

WEC Staff Time-Memorandum of Understanding development and meetings with DOT. Cost: \$1,680 (25 hours X 2 staff members = 50 hours. 50 hours of drafting and meeting time X \$33.60)

Voter Mailing: Initial Eligible but Unregistered Postcard. Costs: \$82,719 (383,703 postcards printed and mailed at a cost of \$.27 per post card which includes file processing, permit postage and labor for DOA distribution services + WEC staff time of 40 hours X \$33.60 = \$1,344)**

Voter Mailing: Verification/Confirmation Notices: Costs: \$13,944 For purposes of this estimate, the WEC assumes that the number of voter registrations will increase with the introduction of the AVR process. If the number of voter registrations increases, the WEC would require funding for the cost of printing and mailing the notices required under the bill. The WEC prints and mails voter verification postcards at a rate of \$.28 per postcard, or \$280 per 1000 postcards. The annual cost would vary based upon the number of qualifying transactions with the DOT, such as driver license, State ID, and vehicle registration applications. Assuming 150,000 qualifying transactions at the DOT annually, and that 30 percent of those transactions represent individuals who are not registered voters and wish to register, the cost of the printing and mailing of notices is estimated to \$12,600 per year (45,000 cards X \$.28) + WEC staff time of 40 hours X \$33.60 = \$1,344.***

Voter Mailing: Resolve Discrepancies in DOT and WEC Data: Costs: \$2,604 For purposes of this estimate, data from 45,000 DOT transactions (30% of 150,000 transactions = 45,000) could be transferred to the WEC. For purposes of this estimate, the WEC estimates that 10% of those transactions could result in a discrepancy that needs to be resolved. Resolving discrepancies could involve sending postcards to 4,500 voters, costing \$1,260 (4500 X \$.28 per card) + WEC staff time of 40 hours X \$33.60 = \$1,344. Some of the contact with voters to resolve discrepancies may be required to be conducted by phone and that would carry an additional cost in addition to the mailing cost estimate provided in this section.

Training Municipal and County Clerks on AVR. Cost: \$2,016. It is assumed that the WEC will be responsible for training municipal and county clerks on the AVR process. It is anticipated that WEC training staff would be required to dedicate an estimated 60 hours of time to create and update training materials for municipal and county clerks, at an average cost of \$33.60 per hour (\$25.85 wage + \$7.75 fringe), for a total cost of \$2,016.

Update and Develop Agency Resources Regarding AVR. Cost: \$2,520. It is assumed that existing WEC agency resources, such as websites and voter outreach materials, would need to be updated to reference AVR. It is also assumed that the WEC would be responsible for creating new materials for the public that outline the AVR process. It is anticipated that WEC staff would be required to dedicate 75 hours, at an average cost of \$33.60 per hour (\$25.85 wage + \$7.75 fringe), to update and create agency resources and materials to include AVR for a total cost of \$2,520.

Total Cost: \$156,135

*As noted in the narrative, this cost does not consider any development or other IT solutions that may need to be

implemented to facilitate the secure import and storage of proof of citizenship documents received from DOT.

**The processing, printing and postage costs are the actual costs spent on the EBU mailing sent per ERIC. The staff time cost is an estimate of one staff member spending 40 hours of time preparing and managing this mailing.

***The WEC is hopeful that the verification/confirmation notices required to be sent as a result of AVR could fit on a standard postcard, although it is possible that all the information required may not fit on a postcard. For purposes of this estimate, the WEC will use the current voter verification postcard cost of \$.28 per card.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications