

Fiscal Estimate Narratives
ELEC 5/24/2019

LRB Number	19-2663/1	Introduction Number	SB-193	Estimate Type	Original
Description using an electronic voting machine to cast a vote with an in-person absentee ballot and providing a penalty					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

Assumptions used in arriving at this estimate:

This bill authorizes a municipality to allow its electors to vote before election day by using an electronic voting machine to cast an in-person absentee ballot. If a municipality adopts a resolution to implement this option, and the Elections Commission certifies that the municipality is capable of implementation, an elector may vote an in-person, absentee ballot before election day at the municipal clerk's office by completing his or her ballot and casting the ballot using an electronic voting system.

In constructing this estimate, the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) made assumptions as to the responsibilities that would be assigned to the agency when implementing the law. The WEC assumes that the proposal requires the WEC to develop a process through which municipalities apply for certification to use the direct balloting process. Once the process is developed, the WEC would then be responsible for examining and approving applications received from municipalities. It is also assumed that the WEC will prescribe the administrative process for direct balloting and develop guidance and training for municipalities. In addition, it is assumed that the WEC will program the statewide election administration system, WisVote, to accommodate the direct balloting process. Because the direct balloting process is optional to municipalities and the WEC does not have data on municipal costs to administer direct balloting, no exact municipal costs are outlined in this estimate.

The WEC believes that these new responsibilities are similar to routine procedures currently administered by the agency and any costs associated with implementing requirements under this bill can be absorbed into the current agency budget. The following additional responsibilities under this bill would be required:

- WEC creation of municipal application to use direct balloting and development of an ongoing application review process
- WEC creation of AVEO-specific forms and training materials
- WEC update of existing materials and resources

WEC staff recommends that agency technology be updated to accommodate direct balloting related data to assist with the administration of the new procedures and produce data regarding direct balloting usage. These changes to our systems would not be required under SB 193, but the updates would allow for transparent and accurate reporting of data regarding the manner which ballots were cast during Wisconsin elections. WEC staff believes that these technology updates will assist local election officials in administering absentee voting using the direct balloting process. It is further believed that the cost of making such changes can be absorbed as part of the regular WisVote update and maintenance process.

WEC staff also recommends that voting equipment testing criteria be adjusted to account for direct balloting features and reporting requirements. It is assumed that additional voting equipment testing criteria would be developed as part of the application review process.

Municipality Implementation Costs and Long-Term Cost Savings of Direct Balloting:

While the WEC does not know the direct impact on local governments, it is assumed that there will be some costs to municipalities who choose to implement direct balloting as well as potential long-term cost savings to municipalities.

Because the direct balloting process is optional for municipalities and no municipality would be required to use the process, the WEC assumes that the municipalities would analyze the fiscal impact of direct balloting on their jurisdiction before opting to use the process. It is assumed that during that decision-making process municipalities will weigh cost along with other factors when making a decision on the suitability of direct balloting for their jurisdiction.

While the WEC does not know what the fiscal impact of implementing direct balloting will be on municipal and county governments, it assumes that there will be some initial costs to implement the process. It is assumed that some of the potential costs to municipalities may include voter education and training of poll workers. It is also assumed that increased time may be required to accommodate the enhanced pre-election voting equipment testing, security protocols, and daily tally reporting.

The WEC also assumes that municipalities who opt to use the direct balloting process may experience a decrease in costs associated with in-person absentee balloting on an ongoing basis. Under the current law, the issuing of in-person ballots and subsequent processing of those ballots at the polls on election day has required additional municipal time and resources due to the increased popularity of absentee voting in recent years. It is assumed that the need for certificate envelopes during in-person absentee voting is eliminated for municipalities using direct balloting. Also, ballots cast using the direct balloting process are cast into electronic voting equipment during the in-person voting process eliminating the need to process those ballots at the polls on election day. It is assumed that municipalities who choose to use the direct balloting process may see a decrease in the number of poll workers and staff hours needed to process absentee ballots at the polls on election day.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications