

Fiscal Estimate - 2021 Session

Original
 Updated
 Corrected
 Supplemental

LRB Number 21-2349/1	Introduction Number AB-0178
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Description
 applications for absentee ballots

Fiscal Effect

State:

- No State Fiscal Effect
- Indeterminate
 - Increase Existing Appropriations
 - Decrease Existing Appropriations
 - Create New Appropriations
- Increase Existing Revenues
- Decrease Existing Revenues
- Increase Costs - May be possible to absorb within agency's budget
 - Yes No
- Decrease Costs

Local:

- No Local Government Costs
- Indeterminate
 - 1. Increase Costs
 - Permissive Mandatory
 - 2. Decrease Costs
 - Permissive Mandatory
 - 3. Increase Revenue
 - Permissive Mandatory
 - 4. Decrease Revenue
 - Permissive Mandatory
- 5. Types of Local Government Units Affected
 - Towns Village Cities
 - Counties Others
 - School Districts WTCS Districts

Fund Sources Affected

- GPR
 FED
 PRO
 PRS
 SEG
 SEGS

Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations

Agency/Prepared By	Authorized Signature	Date
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Fiscal Estimate Narratives

ELEC 6/8/2021

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Description applications for absentee ballots					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

The proposed legislation requires the Wisconsin Elections Commission to prescribe the form and instructions of the absentee ballot application and requires that the application be separate and distinct from the absentee ballot certificate envelope.

In preparation of this fiscal estimate, WEC staff reviewed costs associated with the development of a new absentee envelope, removing the language that states it may also act as a ballot application. Updating and redesigning forms fall within the normal scope of staff duties and finalizing an updated version of each would require approximately 60 staff hours with a total of 120 hours for both. As previously stated, these 120 hours would be considered routine staff activity and would not require additional project time to be allocated.

A larger fiscal impact would fall upon the municipalities. The proposed legislation would require that existing stock of both the absentee application and the certificate envelope be replaced with the updated versions, which would incur significant printing costs. Per staff research and depending on whether a municipality prints in-house or contracts with a private vendor, the cost to print a two-sided, single page form will typically range between \$0.10 and \$0.25. For the purposes of this estimate staff are using the printing cost of \$.17 per two-sided form.

It is unknown how many blank applications clerks maintain in their offices to provide to voters who may request them by mail or by other means and this number obviously varies by municipality. However, as the proposed legislation would require voters participating in in-person absentee voting (IPAV) to also complete an application when voting in the clerk's office or approved alternate site and given that approximately 600,000 voters participate in IPAV in a General Election year, the minimum cost of printing applications for voters would range between \$60,000 and \$150,000 statewide. Using the historical estimate of 600,000 total IPAV voters for elections in a year with a General Election, the total printing costs for municipalities would be \$102,000 for absentee applications across the state.

The cost to print new certificate envelopes is also variable, as municipalities are generally unable to print or prepare absentee envelopes in their own offices and will typically contract through a printing vendor to obtain new stock. An additional consideration is that the absentee voting process requires two envelopes, a larger transmission envelope that the clerk sends to the voter with all the requisite materials to vote and a smaller return envelope that the voter uses to return their ballot. The proposed legislation would not affect the transmission envelope and municipalities would be able to use their existing stock and reorder as normal. The proposed legislation would only affect the return envelope which currently functions, during in-person absentee voting, as both the absentee application and certificate. If existing stock could not be altered to reflect the required language changes on the envelope, municipalities would have to replace it with new compliant envelopes.

While staff were able to identify the cost to print new envelopes, the applicability of this figure toward estimating the financial impact at the municipal level is less clear. Any required changes to the current version of the envelope that would require the replacement of existing stock would obviously incur costs which would vary based on the amount of envelope stock each municipality needed to replace. The estimated printing cost for replacement envelopes would be \$95.00 per 1,000 pieces.

If no stock needed to be replaced with an updated envelope and clerks would be able to implement the new version in their normal procurement processes, i.e., on a rolling basis or as needed, any costs would fall within normal budgetary considerations and would not result in an additional financial impact to the municipality.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications