

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

ELEC 4/14/2021

LRB Number	21-2254/1	Introduction Number	AB-0180	Estimate Type	Original
Description status as an indefinitely confined voter for purposes of receiving absentee ballots automatically and providing a penalty					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

The proposed legislation changes requirements for voters claiming indefinitely confined status for receiving absentee ballots and does all of the following: 1. Requires that the voter's statement claiming that he or she is indefinitely confined be made under oath. With the provision that if the voter is under the age of 65, requires the voter's statement be signed by a physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse who has primary responsibility for the treatment and care of the voter. 2. Specifies that the existence of an outbreak or epidemic of a communicable disease in a voter's community does not qualify the voter as indefinitely confined. 3. Provides that a voter's status as indefinitely confined is removed every two years unless the voter submits a renewal application. 4. Requires the Elections Commission to facilitate the removal of the indefinitely confined status of each voter who received that status between March 12, 2020, and November 6, 2020. A voter whose indefinitely confined status is so removed must submit a new application for indefinitely confined status in order to continue receiving absentee ballots automatically. Finally, the proposed legislation specifies that the penalty for making a false statement for the purpose of qualifying as indefinitely confined is a Class I felony.

WEC Indefinitely Confined Voter List Management:

In preparation of the fiscal estimate, WEC staff reviewed the proposed requirements for maintaining the list of indefinitely confined voters. In order to facilitate the requirement that indefinitely confined status for voters expires every two years unless a renewal application is made, municipal clerks will need to be alerted to expiring applications on a specified schedule based upon when each voter individually qualified for indefinitely confined status. Alerts like this are delivered through the statewide voter database, WisVote. However, as no such notification currently exists within WisVote, this alert would need to be created by WEC development staff. This would be a special project above and beyond normal database improvements and management planned for 2021:

30 hours developer time x \$91.25/hour developer salary = \$2,737.50

Training for clerks about how to access the alerts, trigger the letter, and process renewals and non-responses and non-responses in the database would need to be created. A letter template and process guidance would also have to be written by WEC staff for clerks to access:

60 hours staff time x (\$31.04 salary + \$11.46 fringe) = \$3,239.10

Total WEC Cost for WisVote Alert Development, Training, and Associated Materials Development: \$5,976.60

Municipal Clerk Indefinitely Confined Voter List Management:

Municipal clerks, upon receiving the alerts for expiring indefinitely confined status for impacted voters, will be required to send a first-class letter notifying the voters of the pending indefinitely confined status expiration and requiring them to respond within 30 days to renew their application. This will be an additional cost incurred by the municipalities. While the number of indefinitely confined voters whose status would expire every two years is unknown, there were 70,218 such voters in 2018; a number that increased by approximately 5000 voters biannually. This brings the anticipated number of voters for 2022 to approximately 80,000 with the increase in 2020 taken out of the equation as an anomaly. Under the current USPS pricing system, a bulk first-class mailing cost for a municipal clerk costs \$.73 per piece (\$.51 bulk postage; \$.05 envelope; \$.17 per 2-sided form).

Total mailing costs for municipal clerks over two years: \$58,400.00

Changes to Requirements for Indefinitely Confined Status, 2020 Indefinitely Confined Voter Removal, New Penalties, Restriction:

The remaining elements of the proposed legislation have very minimal, if any, fiscal impact. The largest impact would be updating existing materials that outline the indefinitely confined application process to include the requirements of a sworn statement made under oath, the accompanying care provider statement, and a one-time, large-scale removal of the indefinitely confined voters added March-November 2020. Such changes would be part of normal updates to Elections Commission manuals or communications, processes in statewide voter database, as well as some changes at the municipal level for processing indefinitely confined applications. Similarly, updates to any materials that discuss clerk practices that would now constitute a violation and the penalties associated with a violation as well as the prohibition from using an epidemic/outbreak as a qualification for indefinitely confined status would be part of normal updates and would therefore have very minimal, if any fiscal impact.

Minimal to no fiscal impact for changes to indefinitely confined application requirements, removal of 2020 applicants, new penalties, restriction.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications