

Fiscal Estimate - 2023 Session

Original
 Updated
 Corrected
 Supplemental

LRB Number 23-2968/1	Introduction Number AB-0396
Description fees for obtaining the official voter registration list	
Fiscal Effect State: <input type="checkbox"/> No State Fiscal Effect <input type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Revenues <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs - May be possible to absorb within agency's budget <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Revenues <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Create New Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs	
Local: <input type="checkbox"/> No Local Government Costs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory 5. Types of Local Government Units Affected <input type="checkbox"/> Towns <input type="checkbox"/> Village <input type="checkbox"/> Cities <input type="checkbox"/> Counties <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/> School Districts <input type="checkbox"/> WTCS Districts	
Fund Sources Affected Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> GPR <input type="checkbox"/> FED <input type="checkbox"/> PRO <input type="checkbox"/> PRS <input type="checkbox"/> SEG <input type="checkbox"/> SEGS	
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Date 10/3/2023	

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

ELEC 10/3/2023

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Description fees for obtaining the official voter registration list					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

This bill would reduce state revenue by approximately \$500,000 per year.

Badger Voters is a website established by the Wisconsin Elections Commission ("WEC") and its predecessors to provide a simple and automated way for the public to request voter data lists, absentee ballot data, and candidate nomination papers. Launched in 2014, Badger Voters was intended to: (1) reduce the workload of local election officials; (2) improve public access to election information; and (3) apply technology to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of customer service. Wisconsin law directs the Commission to provide this information and specifies how a fee schedule is to be developed. (Wis. Stat. § 6.36 regarding voter registration data and Wis. Stat. § 5.05(14)(b) regarding absentee ballot data.)

The Badger Voters website (<https://badgervoters.wi.gov/>) provides a simple and automated way for the public to request voter data, absentee records, and candidates' nomination papers. Data can be sorted by election, office, county, municipality, ward, aldermanic district, and many more categories. This allows the customer to receive only the data they are seeking.

Absentee ballot data is also available. Absentee data purchases provide customers with application and ballot activity and allow the customers the option to "subscribe" for future updates to data received and the ability to receive new files at the frequency they select; twice per week, weekly, every other week, or monthly.

Badger Voters offers a level of service and flexibility unmatched by any other state. Wisconsin alone provides a convenient online portal supporting custom requests for virtually any information contained in the statewide system. Most other states require a paper application to obtain voter data, few states support custom data requests or absentee ballot data (most offer a pre-defined printed product or CD-ROM), and nearly half of states restrict access to voter data to specific groups (23 states). No other state offers all the features available in Wisconsin (web portal; support for custom requests; absentee ballot data, online payment; instant data access for self-service customers; and open availability to anyone for any purpose). This level of service comes with increased costs to support and secure the system.

Badger Voters fees are based on two elements as required by law: (1) the cost to produce the information; and (2) the cost to maintain the information. Wis. Stat § 6.36. Since 2019, the average annual program revenue is \$607,669 with an average of 896 transactions each year. The overwhelming majority of transactions in this period (91%) cost \$250 or less and would not be affected by this bill. But the remaining 9% of transactions represent over \$500,000 of program revenue that would be lost if fees were capped at \$250.

The approximately \$500,000 of program revenue lost under the bill represents one-third of the \$1.5 million annual cost to maintain and secure Wisconsin's voter registration and election administration system. Thus, the bill would either result in additional funding to replace lost revenue, or it would result in substantially reduced services to Wisconsin clerks and voters.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications