



SOUTH CAROLINA REVENUE AND FISCAL AFFAIRS OFFICE
STATEMENT OF ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT
(803)734-3780 • RFA.SC.GOV/IMPACTS

This fiscal impact statement is produced in compliance with the South Carolina Code of Laws and House and Senate rules. The focus of the analysis is on governmental expenditure and revenue impacts and may not provide a comprehensive summary of the legislation.

Bill Number: H. 4919 Introduced on February 3, 2022
Author: Lucas
Subject: Absentee Voting
Requestor: House Judiciary
RFA Analyst(s): Miller
Impact Date: March 1, 2022

Fiscal Impact Summary

This bill creates a two-week early voting period preceding every general election. Each county must establish a certain number of early voting locations, ranging from one to seven, for registered voters to vote in-person during this period. This bill also modifies the absentee voting ballot and who may vote absentee. Additionally, this bill creates a new felony for those who intentionally publicly report the absentee ballot tabulation prior to the close of the polls.

This bill may increase General Fund expenditures by up to \$875,520 for the South Carolina Election Commission (Elections) beginning in FY 2022-23 for reimbursements provided to local boards of voter registration and elections for staffing of the required 192 early-voting locations. Based on the current requirements for election day, Elections assumes each of the 192 required early-voting location will be staffed with four poll workers and an additional clerk who will receive the same compensation as those who work at the polls on election day. If staffing levels are lower, the expenditures would be reduced as well. Additionally, this bill will increase expenditures by \$160,000 for Elections in FY 2022-23 to update the state's Voter Registration and Election Management System (VREMS). Elections anticipates covering this one-time expense with Federal Funds from the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) security grant.

This bill will have no expenditure impact for Judicial, because, while the potential increase in the caseloads for both general sessions and the court of common pleas is unknown, Judicial anticipates the impact will be minimal and can be managed within existing appropriations.

This bill will result in an undetermined increase in General Fund and Other Funds expenditures for the Department of Corrections (Corrections) beginning in FY 2022-23, as the impact will depend upon the number of convictions under this new felony and the duration of any imprisonments. The total cost to house an inmate in FY 2021-22 is \$30,187, of which \$27,883 is state funded.

This bill creates a new felony with a potential fine of up to \$1,000. This may result in a change in the fines and fees collected in court. Court fines and fees are distributed to the General Fund, Other Funds, and local funds. Therefore, the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA) anticipates this bill may result in an undetermined impact to General Fund revenue, Other Funds revenue, and local revenue due to the modifications in fines and fees collections in court.

Based on information provided by Elections, RFA anticipates this bill may increase local expenditures by \$875,520, based upon assuming each of the 192 required early-voting location is staffed with four poll worker and an additional clerk who receives the same compensation as those who work at the polls on election day. This estimate is based on the current staffing requirement for election polls as provided by Elections. These expenditures will be offset by reimbursements from Elections.

Explanation of Fiscal Impact

Introduced on February 3, 2022

State Expenditure

This bill creates a two-week early voting period preceding every general election. Each county must establish a certain number of early voting locations for registered voters to be able to vote in-person on Monday through Saturday for this two-week period. The minimum required number of locations may range from one to seven depending on the number of registered voters or the square miles of the county. The main office of the local county board of voter registration and elections constitutes one of the required locations. This bill also limits a candidate's ability to run for multiple offices in one election or receive nomination from more than one political party.

Further, this bill updates the absentee ballot form and requires a driver's license or other form of identification be provided for a person to obtain and return an absentee ballot in person. This bill also specifies that any qualified elector may vote absentee if he will be absent from the county during the early-voting period and election day. Additionally, this bill changes the timing of when absentee ballots may be counted from 9:00 AM the day of the election to 7:00 AM on the day before the election and specifies that any elected official or election worker who intentionally publicly reports the absentee ballot tabulation prior to the close of the polls is guilty of a felony and will be subject to a fine up to \$1,000 or imprisonment for up to five years.

South Carolina Election Commission. This bill requires Elections to update the absentee forms among other responsibilities. Elections anticipates being able to manage these responsibilities within existing appropriations. Additionally, Elections anticipates the need to update to VREMS due to this bill. Elections anticipates the cost to update VREMS will be approximately \$160,000 in FY 2022-23. Elections anticipates using Federal Funds provided through the federal HAVA security grant to cover this one-time expenditure.

Further, Elections reimburses local boards of voter registration and elections for certain elections expenses. This bill will result in an increase in local reimbursable expenditures to staff early-voting locations, and thereby, the state reimbursement. Elections anticipates that the early-voting locations will be staffed in the same manner as polling locations on election day, which requires four poll workers and an additional clerk. Based on this assumption, this bill will increase General Fund expenditures by up to \$875,520 for Elections beginning in FY 2022-23 for reimbursements provided to local boards of voter registration and elections for staffing of the

192 required early-voting locations. If the staffing requirements are lower, the expenditures would be reduced as well.

Judicial. This bill creates a felony for an election official, election worker, or candidate who intentionally publicly reports the results of an absentee ballot tabulation prior to the close of polls. This provision may result in an increase in the caseload in General Sessions court. Additionally, Judicial anticipates this bill may increase the number of actions brought in the Court of Common Pleas, related to challenges to an election. While the potential increase in the caseloads for both courts is unknown, Judicial anticipates the impact will be minimal and can be managed any increase within existing appropriations. Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact for Judicial.

Department of Corrections. This bill creates a felony for an election official, election worker, or candidate who intentionally publicly reports the results of an absentee ballot tabulation prior to the close of polls. Upon conviction, the person will be fined no more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for no more than five years. The total cost to house an inmate in FY 2021-22 is \$30,187, of which \$27,883 is state funded. Therefore, this bill will result in an undetermined increase in expenses for Corrections beginning in FY 2022-23, as the impact is dependent upon the number of convictions under this new felony and the duration of any imprisonment.

State Revenue

This bill creates a new felony with a potential fine of up to \$1,000. This may result in a change in the fines and fees collected in court. Court fines and fees are distributed to the General Fund, Other Funds, and local funds. Therefore, RFA anticipates this bill may result in an undetermined impact to General Fund revenue, Other Funds revenue, and local revenue due to the modifications in fines and fees collections in court.

Local Expenditure

This bill requires an early-voting period of two weeks preceding a general election which will be open every day except Sunday. Each county board of voter registration and elections must establish a minimum number of early-voting locations based on a formula related to either the number of registered voters or the square mileage of the county, whichever results in a larger number of locations. RFA calculated the minimum required number of early-voting locations based on the number of registered voters by county, published on the State Election Commission website and RFA's data on the square mileage for each county. Based on this calculation, there will be 192 early-voting locations statewide. This bill does not specify who will staff these early-voting locations. Elections anticipates that each location will require the same number of poll workers to work the early-voting locations as are required to work the polls on election day. This includes four poll workers and an additional clerk. Assuming each poll worker for the early-voting locations received the same training and daily compensation as those working on election day, each poll worker will receive \$60 for attending training and \$75 per day for working at the early-voting locations. Additionally, the clerk will receive \$60 per day. This will result in a total of \$4,560 per early-voting location for the duration of the early-voting period. The following table displays the minimum required number of early-voting places in each county and the total cost of staffing each location.

ESTIMATED MINIMUM NUMBER OF REQUIRED EARLY-VOTING LOCATIONS

County	# Locations	Total Poll Worker Compensation	County	# Locations	Total Poll Worker Compensation
Abbeville	3	\$13,680	Greenwood	3	\$13,680
Aiken	6	\$27,360	Hampton	3	\$13,680
Allendale	3	\$13,680	Horry	7	\$31,920
Anderson	4	\$18,240	Jasper	4	\$18,240
Bamberg	2	\$9,120	Kershaw	4	\$18,240
Barnwell	3	\$13,680	Lancaster	3	\$13,680
Beaufort	5	\$22,800	Laurens	4	\$18,240
Berkeley	7	\$31,920	Lee	3	\$13,680
Calhoun	2	\$9,120	Lexington	6	\$27,360
Charleston	7	\$31,920	Marion	3	\$13,680
Cherokee	2	\$9,120	Marlboro	3	\$13,680
Chester	3	\$13,680	McCormick	2	\$9,120
Chesterfield	5	\$22,800	Newberry	4	\$18,240
Clarendon	4	\$18,240	Oconee	4	\$18,240
Colleton	6	\$27,360	Orangeburg	6	\$27,360
Darlington	3	\$13,680	Pickens	3	\$13,680
Dillon	3	\$13,680	Richland	7	\$31,920
Dorchester	3	\$13,680	Saluda	3	\$13,680
Edgefield	3	\$13,680	Spartanburg	6	\$27,360
Fairfield	4	\$18,240	Sumter	4	\$18,240
Florence	5	\$22,800	Union	3	\$13,680
Georgetown	6	\$27,360	Williamsburg	5	\$22,800
Greenville	7	\$31,920	York	6	\$27,360

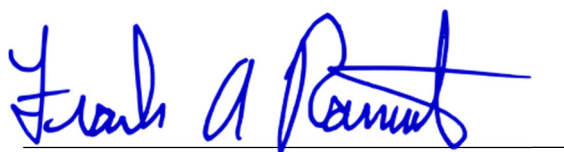
Source: State Election Commission and Revenue and Fiscal Affairs

This bill specifies that the main office of each county board will be considered one of the required locations. This calculation assumes that the same number of poll workers will be needed to staff the main office. Therefore, local expenditures statewide would increase by up to \$875,520 annually beginning in FY 2022-23. Elections anticipates this expenditure will be offset by state reimbursements.

Local Revenue

This bill creates a new felony with a potential fine of up to \$1,000. This may result in a change in the fines and fees collected in court. Court fines and fees are distributed to the General Fund, Other Funds, and local funds. Therefore, RFA anticipates this bill may result in an undetermined impact to General Fund revenue, Other Funds revenue, and local revenue due to the modifications in fines and fees collections in court.

Additionally, this bill will result in an increase in local reimbursements from Elections totaling \$875,520 to offset the cost of staffing the local early-voting locations.



Frank A. Rainwater, Executive Director