



SOUTH CAROLINA REVENUE AND FISCAL AFFAIRS OFFICE
STATEMENT OF ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT
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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:	S. 1031	Amended by House Judiciary on May 3, 2022
Author:	Campsen	
Subject:	Register of Deeds	
Requestor:	House of Representatives	
RFA Analyst(s):	Miller	
Impact Date:	May 4, 2022	

Fiscal Impact Summary

This bill makes changes to provisions regarding elections, early voting, investigation of election fraud, and requirements for election to the office of register of deeds as follows:

Title 7

This bill specifies that the State Election Commission (Elections) has powers and duties to supervise and standardize the performance, conduct, and practices of the county boards of voter registration and elections. This will have no expenditure impact as Elections anticipates being able to manage these duties with existing staff and within existing appropriations.

This bill also 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 ranges 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 may be allowed to count as 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.

This bill may increase General Fund expenditures by up to \$829,920 for Elections beginning in FY 2022-23 for reimbursements provided to local boards of voter registration and elections for staffing of the required 182 early-voting locations. Based on the current requirements for election day, Elections assumes each of the 182 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 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 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. Further, the provision will result in an undetermined increase in General Fund and Other Funds expenditures for 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.

Additionally, SLED indicates that the agency will need an additional 3.0 FTEs and expenses to operate the required hotline and investigate reports of election fraud. The estimated General Fund expenditures will total \$209,950 for SLED in FY 2022-23 for 3.0 FTEs' salary, fringe, and other operating expenses and \$78,600 for the purchase a vehicle, for a total General Fund expenditure increase of \$288,550 in FY 2022-23. Each year thereafter, the General Fund expenditure due to this bill for SLED will be \$209,950.

This bill also specifies that the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House have the right to intervene on behalf of their respective bodies in court cases challenging the validity of an election law, policy, or the way an election is conducted. This bill will have no expenditure impact for the Senate and the House of Representatives, as both bodies anticipate being able to manage any additional responsibilities with existing staff and within existing appropriations.

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, Revenue and Fiscal Affairs (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 \$829,920, based upon assuming each of the 182 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.

Title 30

This bill also establishes minimum requirements for an individual to qualify for the office of the register of deeds, including education and experience requirements and specifies an action may be brought by the Attorney General to determine a person's eligibility to serve or seek to serve as the register of deeds.

RFA anticipates that the Attorney General can manage any additional responsibilities required by this bill within existing appropriations. Additionally, this bill does not alter the responsibilities of Elections. Therefore, this section of the bill will have no expenditure impact.

RFA anticipates this section will have no local expenditure impact, as each county will be able to review the application to ensure a person meets the minimum requirements of eligibility to hold the office of the register of deeds.

Explanation of Fiscal Impact

Amended by House Judiciary on May 3, 2022

State Expenditure

Title 7

The bill specifies that Elections has powers and duties to supervise and standardize the performance, conduct, and practices of the county boards of voter registration and elections.

This bill also 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 may be allowed to count as 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.

Also, this bill requires Elections to update the absentee forms, maintain the statewide voter registration database, and provide an annual report to the House and Senate on the statewide voter registration database, among other responsibilities.

South Carolina Election Commission.

This bill specifies that Elections has powers and duties to supervise and standardize the performance, conduct, and practices of the county boards of elections and voter registrations. Elections anticipates being able to manage these duties within existing appropriations.

This bill also requires Elections to update the absentee forms, maintain the statewide voter registration database, and provide an annual report to the House and Senate on the statewide voter registration database, among other responsibilities. Elections anticipates being able to manage these responsibilities with existing staff and 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 \$829,920 for Elections beginning in FY 2022-23 for reimbursements provided to local boards of voter registration and elections for staffing of the 182 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 manage 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 Law Enforcement Division. This bill as amended requires SLED to establish a hotline telephone number and email address to receive reports on possible election fraud and other election related violations and must investigate all reported violations. SLED reports that it will need to hire 3.0 FTEs, one administrative coordinator to manage the hotline and e-mail reporting, one statistical analyst to provide research and information on reported complaints, and one agent to investigate the reported complaints. The total General Fund expenditure for these FTEs for salary, and fringe is \$182,950. SLED also anticipated an additional \$27,000 for other operating expenses to support these FTEs. Further, SLED will also incur one-time costs of \$78,600 to purchase a vehicle for the agent, as well as computer and telephone equipment for all new staff. Therefore, the total General Fund expenditure impact for SLED in FY 2022-23 would be \$288,550. Each year thereafter the total General Fund expenditure impact will be \$209,950.

Senate and House of Representatives. This bill as amended specifies that the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House have the right to intervene on behalf of their respective bodies in court cases challenging the validity of an election law, policy, or the way an election is

conducted. Both bodies anticipate that any additional responsibilities created by this amended bill can be managed with existing staff and within existing appropriations.

Title 30

This bill also establishes minimum requirements for an individual to qualify for the office of the register of deeds, including education and experience requirements. These requirements do not apply to any person who holds the office on the effective date of this bill. Additionally, an individual must not have a pattern of failing to properly record records in a manner provided by in §30-5-90 to be eligible to serve or continue to serve as the register of deeds. This requirement applies to all persons holding this office. This bill also specifies that §15-63-60 grants the Attorney General the authority to bring an action to determine a person's eligibility to continue to serve or seek to serve as the register of deeds.

RFA anticipates that the Attorney General can manage any additional responsibilities required by this bill within existing appropriations. Additionally, this bill does not alter the responsibilities of the State Election Commission. Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact.

State Revenue

Title 7

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 increase in General Fund revenue, Other Funds revenue, and local revenue due to the modifications in fines and fees collections in court.

Local Expenditure

Title 7

This bill requires an early voting period of two weeks preceding a general election, a primary, special election, and all municipal elections and to the extent time permits, an early voting period for primary runoffs. For general elections, each county board of voter registration and elections must establish 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. However, this bill specifies that when the formulas differ by more than three locations, then the Executive Director of the Election Commission may authorize two fewer locations than the higher formula requires.

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's website and RFA's data on the square mileage for each county. Based on these calculations, the counties of Chesterfield, Colleton, Georgetown, Orangeburg, and Williamsburg would all be eligible to have two fewer locations. RFA assumes each of the counties would receive permission from the Election Commission to have two fewer locations than the formula requires, and therefore, calculated the number of required locations based on this assumption. 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 works and an additional

clerk. Assuming each poll worker for the early-voting locations receives 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	POLL WORKER COMPENSATION	COUNTY	# LOCATIONS	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	3	\$13,680	Newberry	4	\$18,240
Clarendon	4	\$18,240	Oconee	4	\$18,240
Colleton	4	\$18,240	Orangeburg	4	\$18,240
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	4	\$18,240	Williamsburg	3	\$13,680
Greenville	7	\$31,920	York	6	\$27,360

Source: State Election Commission and Revenue and Fiscal Affairs

This bill specifies that if the main office of a county board of voter registration and elections is used as an early-voting location, it may constitute 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 \$829,920 annually beginning in FY 2022-23. Elections anticipates this local expenditure will be offset by state reimbursements.

Local Revenue

Title 7

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 increase in 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 \$829,920 to offset the cost of staffing the local early-voting locations.

Title 30

Also, this bill establishes minimum requirements for an individual to qualify for the office of the register of deeds. These requirements do not apply to any person who holds the office on the effective date of this bill.

According to the South Carolina Association of Counties, twenty-five counties encompass the responsibilities of the office of the register of deeds within the clerk of court's office, fifteen counties appoint an individual, and the remaining six counties elect an individual to serve in the office of the register of deeds. RFA anticipates this bill will have no local expenditure impact, as each county will be able to review the application to ensure a person meets the minimum requirements of eligibility to hold the office of the register of deeds.

Introduced on February 1, 2022

State Expenditure

This bill establishes minimum requirements for an individual to qualify for the office of the register of deeds. According to the South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC), there are six counties who elect a person to serve in the office of the register of deeds.

This bill will have no expenditure impact for the State Election Commission, as this bill does not alter the responsibilities of the agency.

State Revenue

N/A

Local Expenditure

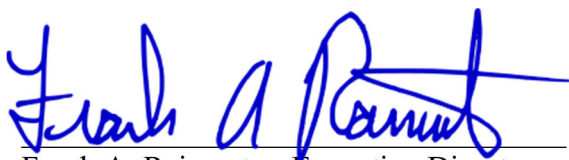
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According to SCAC, twenty-five counties encompass the responsibilities of the office of the register of deeds within the clerk of court's office, fifteen counties appoint an individual, and the remaining six counties elect an individual to serve in the office of the register of deeds. Additionally, RFA anticipates this bill will have no local expenditure impact, as each county will

be able to review the application to ensure a person meets the minimum requirements of eligibility to hold the office of the register of deeds.

Local Revenue

N/A



Frank A. Rainwater, Executive Director