

COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
OVERSIGHT DIVISION

FISCAL NOTE

L.R. No.: 1101S.01I
Bill No.: SB 210
Subject: County Officials; Elections; Secretary of State
Type: Original
Date: February 23, 2023

Bill Summary: This proposal allows for the curing of incomplete absentee ballot envelopes.

FISCAL SUMMARY

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON GENERAL REVENUE FUND			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Total Estimated Net Effect on General Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON OTHER STATE FUNDS			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Total Estimated Net Effect on <u>Other State Funds</u>	\$0	\$0	\$0

Numbers within parentheses: () indicate costs or losses.

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON FEDERAL FUNDS			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Total Estimated Net Effect on <u>All</u> Federal Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE)			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Total Estimated Net Effect on FTE	0	0	0

- Estimated Net Effect (expenditures or reduced revenues) expected to exceed \$250,000 in any of the three fiscal years after implementation of the act or at full implementation of the act.
- Estimated Net Effect (savings or increased revenues) expected to exceed \$250,000 in any of the three fiscal years after implementation of the act or at full implementation of the act.

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON LOCAL FUNDS			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Local Government	(Unknown)	(Unknown)	(Unknown)

FISCAL ANALYSIS

ASSUMPTION

Officials from the **Office of the Secretary of State (SOS)** assume the proposal will have no fiscal impact on their organization.

Oversight requested from the SOS the number of absentee ballots that were rejected in the most current elections. **SOS** provided that they receive their absentee statistics from post-election surveys. They only do these for state-level elections so cannot provide a number for municipal elections. The reporting for the primary is currently incomplete as it had to be delayed due to other more urgent projects. However, for the general election their surveying was complete and there were 3,055 ballots rejected (including military/overseas).

Oversight notes that according to the SOS the below is the total for returned ballot postage that the State of Missouri has reimbursed to the local election authorities in the past five years.

2018	\$ 50,000
2019	\$ 100,484
2020	\$ 58,709
2021	\$ 477,017
2022	\$ 43,052

Officials from the **Jackson County Board of Elections** note they provide each absentee voter with detailed instructions that accompanies the voter's ballot they receive via mail. Instructions include how to properly vote the ballot and instructions for properly filling out and signing the envelope. Additionally, the Jackson County Election Board instructs the voter on the absentee envelope if there is no need for notarization otherwise the instructions are clear notarization is needed.

Election authorities are understaffed especially during large elections and are occupied fulfilling the absentee requests that come in daily. Election authorities would require additional full-time staff if a law such as SB 210 passed.

Two Fulltime Staff Members - \$80,000

In most cases election authorities do not have access to a voter's email address or phone number. Election authorities would have no other option but to mail a notice via 1st class mail to the voter which generally takes 7 working days. Voters submitting their ballots less than two weeks before the election would not have the benefit of getting the rejection notice in a timely manner to cure their ballot and some might receive the notice after the date for submission of corrections.

Additional Postage for Notices - \$ 1,500

TOTAL **\$81,500**

Officials from the **St. Louis County Board of Elections** assume the proposal will have no fiscal impact on their organization. They currently already do this in St. Louis County. They have largely automated this process and any postage cost is already built into their budget for elections.

In response to similar legislation, SB 149 from 2023, officials from the **Kansas City Election Board** assumed it would cost \$10,000 per election in staff time, temporary expense, postage and supplies to contact these voters to cure ballots.

Oversight notes that the Kansas City Election Board attempted to contact each person who submitted an improperly filled out absentee ballot in November. They tried to contact 980 absentee voters by phone or letter. They rectified 575, leaving 405 rejected. The Kansas City Election Board had 2 employees working on this project for the majority of the 6 week absentee period. Therefore, their calculation above was based on 2 bipartisan employees @ \$20.00 per hour (including employers' FICA) for 40 hours weeks times 6 weeks or \$9,600, plus estimating postage, printing, legal expense and staff overtime.

Officials from the **Platte County Board of Elections** assume the proposal will have no fiscal impact on their respective organization.

Oversight notes there is a potential increase of cost to local election authorities for postage, printing, and staff time to rectify absentee ballot rejections. We are unable to determine how many individuals will cast an absentee ballot or how many absentee ballots will be rejected; therefore, Oversight will reflect a potential unknown cost to local election authorities.

<u>FISCAL IMPACT – State Government</u>	FY 2024 (10 Mo.)	FY 2025	FY 2026
	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>

<u>FISCAL IMPACT – Local Government</u>	FY 2024 (10 Mo.)	FY 2025	FY 2026
LOCAL ELECTION AUTHORITIES			
<u>Cost – postage, printing, and processing absentee ballots rejections</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>
ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON LOCAL ELECTION AUTHORITIES	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>

FISCAL IMPACT – Small Business

No direct fiscal impact to small businesses would be expected as a result of this proposal.

FISCAL DESCRIPTION

Under current law, if the statement on any absentee ballot envelope has not been completed, the absentee ballot is required to be rejected. Under this act, the election authority is required to notify the voter that the envelope is missing information by all means reasonably calculated to make contact with the voter. The voter must be permitted an opportunity to supply the missing information by visiting the office of the election authority or by completing an affidavit. The Secretary of State is responsible for developing an affidavit form to be used for such purposes. The act expressly prohibits changing any selections made on the ballot contained within the ballot envelope.

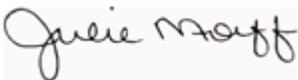
Only the office of the election authority is permitted to contact voters pursuant to this act.

Voters have until the close of polls on Election Day to supply missing information on the absentee ballot envelope. If a voter fails to supply the missing information prior to that time, the absentee ballot shall be rejected.

This legislation is not federally mandated, would not duplicate any other program and would not require additional capital improvements or rental space.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Office of the Secretary of State
Kansas City Election Board
Jackson County Board of Elections
St. Louis County Board of Elections
Platte County Board of Elections



Julie Morff
Director
February 23, 2023



Ross Strope
Assistant Director
February 23, 2023