Colorado Legislative Council Staff

HB16-1070

FISCAL NOTE

FISCAL IMPACT: ☒ State ☒ Local ☐ Statutory Public Entity ☐ Conditional ☐ No Fiscal Impact

Drafting Number: LLS 16-0357	**Date:**	January 20, 2016
Prime Sponsor(s): Rep. Neville P.	**Bill Status:**	House SVMA
Sen. Neville T.	**Fiscal Analyst:**	Chris Creighton (303-866-5834)

BILL TOPIC: SIGNATURE VERIFICATION IN MUNICIPAL MAIL BALLOT ELECTION

Fiscal Impact Summary	FY 2016-2017	FY 2017-2018
State Revenue		
State Expenditures	**$15,450**	
Department of State Cash Fund	$15,450	
FTE Position Change		
Appropriation Required: $15,000 - Department of State (FY 2016-17).		
Future Year Impacts: None.		

Summary of Legislation

This bill requires an election judge to compare the signature on each ballot return envelope with the signature of the eligible elector stored in the statewide voter registration system (SCORE) for every municipal mail ballot election. The use of a signature verification device for this purpose is authorized.

If the signatures match, the ballot is counted. If the signatures do not match, two other election judges must compare the signatures. If the election judges determine that the signatures do not match, the clerk must send the eligible voter a letter explaining the discrepancy and a form for the voter to confirm that they returned a ballot. If the form confirming that the elector returned a ballot is received within eight days after election day, the ballot must be counted. If the form is not returned or the voter indicates that they did not return a ballot, the ballot is not counted.

This bill also requires that municipal clerks be given access to the digitized signatures in SCORE and that clerks provide training in signature comparison to election judges.

Background

Signature verification for mail ballots is currently only performed for municipal elections conducted as part of a coordinated election by a county clerk. For other non-coordinated elections under the Municipal Election Code, signature verification is not done for mail ballots. Upon receipt of a mail ballot, an election judge compares the information on the envelope to election records to qualify the submitted ballot. Once qualified, the election judge indicates in the pollbook that the elector has cast a ballot and deposits the ballot in an official ballot box.

State Expenditures

This bill results in one-time cash fund costs totaling $15,450 in the Department of State. These costs, paid from the Department of State Cash Fund, are for computer system changes to the SCORE database that will allow municipalities to access voter signatures. This requires 150 hours of programming at a rate of $103 per hour. This estimate is based on municipalities having access to the three most recent voter signatures stored in SCORE and municipal staff using their existing log-ins for access.

Local Government Impact

Impacts to local governments are expected to be minimal and only for municipalities conducting non-coordinated elections. Specifically, these municipalities will have increased workload to train election judges to verify signatures. However given that training is regularly provided for election judges and verification of voter information already is conducted for mail ballots, the workload impact of these new duties is expected to be minimal.

Municipalities are authorized to use a signature verification devise under this bill. Municipalities choosing to purchase a devise will have additional election costs. Municipal election costs may increase slightly to mail required forms to voters whose signature do not match.

Effective Date

The bill takes effect August 10, 2016, if the General Assembly adjourns on May 11, 2016, as scheduled, and no referendum petition is filed. It applies to municipal elections conducted on or after March 30, 2018.

State Appropriations

For FY2016-17, this bill requires an appropriation of $15,450 to the Department of State Cash Fund.

State and Local Government Contacts

Counties	Municipalities	County Clerks
Office of Information Technology	Secretary of State	