

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD
Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 82ND LEGISLATIVE REGULAR SESSION

March 28, 2011

TO: Honorable Larry Taylor, Chair, House Committee on Elections

FROM: John S O'Brien, Director, Legislative Budget Board

IN RE: HB2891 by Sheets (Relating to the provision of a voter's fingerprints with a mailed ballot.),
As Introduced

Estimated Two-year Net Impact to General Revenue Related Funds for HB2891, As Introduced: a negative impact of (\$318,333) through the biennium ending August 31, 2013.

The bill would make no appropriation but could provide the legal basis for an appropriation of funds to implement the provisions of the bill.

General Revenue-Related Funds, Five-Year Impact:

Fiscal Year	Probable Net Positive/(Negative) Impact to General Revenue Related Funds
2012	(\$318,333)
2013	\$0
2014	(\$28,333)
2015	\$0
2016	(\$28,333)

All Funds, Five-Year Impact:

Fiscal Year	Probable Savings/(Cost) from General Revenue Fund 1
2012	(\$318,333)
2013	\$0
2014	(\$28,333)
2015	\$0
2016	(\$28,333)

Fiscal Analysis

The bill would require the early voting clerk to include with a ballot by mail materials a disposable fingerprint inked strip and instructions for a voter to include a thumbprint on the ballot. The bill would allow a fingerprint verification committee to be appointed to determine whether the fingerprints submitted with a ballot by mail is that of the voter. The Secretary of State would be allowed to establish methods to obtain fingerprints of voters including entering into agreements with the Department of Public Safety and other state agencies and governmental entities to provide fingerprints. If a fingerprint verification committee would be appointed, the bill would require a ballot by mail to include a valid thumbprint in order for the ballot by mail to be accepted.

Methodology

According to the Secretary of State, there were approximately 200,000 ballots by mail for the 2010 primary. Assuming counties purchase fingerprint scanners and readers to compare the ballot by mail thumbprints, it is assumed that it would take one minute per thumbprint to determine whether the thumbprint submitted is that of the voter. At the hourly rate paid for the 2010 primary of \$8.50 per hour, the total fiscal impact, excluding technology costs, is estimated to be \$28,333 out of the General Revenue Fund in each primary year (200,000 ballots by mail * 1 minute / 60 minutes in an hour * 8.50 per hour).

Technology

The technology impact of this bill is estimated to be \$290,000 out of the General Revenue Fund for fiscal year 2012. The Secretary of State (SOS) assumes that it would take a contracted programmer approximately 900 hours at a rate of \$100 per hour to modify the Texas Election Administration Management (TEAM) statewide voter registration system to allow for obtaining, displaying, and printing thumbprints totaling \$90,000. SOS also assumes that additional computer disk storage for thumbprints storage, totaling \$200,000, would be needed.

Local Government Impact

The bill would require that the early voting clerk include a disposable fingerprint inked strip with the balloting materials mailed to all voters that vote by mail and create an optional process to verify the voter's fingerprint as a condition of accepting the mail ballot. County election administrations reported moderate to significant costs associated with the provisions of the bill.

Burleson County reported that inked strips would cost an estimated \$2,800 and an additional staff member would be needed for ballot processing, estimated at a cost of \$25,000. Costs beyond that would vary with necessity for equipment, estimated at \$200 per fingerprint scanner and \$350 per fingerprint reader. Fingerprint classification training was reported at \$287 per trainee, and mailing costs could be increased due to requiring larger envelopes and new costs of mailing.

Tarrant County reported anticipated costs of \$142,000 (roughly 3.1% of current department budget expenditures) for FY 2012 and FY 2016 and \$67,000 (roughly 1.4% of current department budget expenditures) for FY 2013 through FY 2015 if all of the provisions of the bill were implemented, including verification.

Bexar County reported anticipated costs of \$445,347 (roughly 4.9% of current department budget expenditures) for FY 2012 and \$169,171 (roughly 1.9% of current department budget expenditures) for FY 2013, increasing annually to \$183,240 in FY 2016 if all of the provisions of the bill were implemented, including verification. However, Bexar County noted that this estimate assumes all voters would be fingerprinted, rather than only ballots submitted by mail.

Rockwall County reported that costs associated with the bill would be \$800 per year.

Source Agencies: 307 Secretary of State, 405 Department of Public Safety

LBB Staff: JOB, JT, BTA, KKR