

Department of Planning and Budget

2017 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. Bill Number: SB902

House of Origin ☒ Introduced ☐ Substitute ☐ Engrossed
Second House ☐ In Committee ☐ Substitute ☐ Enrolled

2. Patron: Obenshain**3. Committee:** Privileges and Elections**4. Title:** Primary elections; voter registration by political party.

5. Summary: Adds party affiliation to the information that an applicant is asked to provide when registering to vote. The applicant may indicate that he is an independent. The bill requires the State Board of Elections (State Board), in September 2017, to notify all registered voters of the new party registration law and send them a return card to indicate their party affiliation or independent status. Any voter who does not state a party affiliation shall be designated as independent in the registration records. Voters may change their party affiliation or independent status by written notice at any time before the registration records are closed in advance of an election. The bill (i) requires the state party chairman to notify the State Board by January 31 of each year whether the party will close or open its primaries, (ii) requires that primary candidate petitions be signed and witnessed by voters registered as affiliated with the party conducting the primary, (iii) sets the required number of petition signatures at one percent of the number of voters registered as affiliated with the party in the election district where the primary is being held, and (iv) allows an official political party to retain that status as long as at least 15 percent of the Commonwealth's registered voters are registered as affiliated with that party. The provisions of the bill are applicable to primaries conducted after January 1, 2018.

6. Budget Amendment Necessary: Yes – Item 86.**7. Fiscal Impact Estimates:** Preliminary – see Item 8.**Expenditure Impact:**

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Dollars</i>	<i>Fund</i>
2017	\$0	-
2018	\$3,790,800	GF

8. Fiscal Implications: According to the Department of Elections (ELECT), the proposed legislation is expected to have a one-time fiscal impact of \$3,790,800 in fiscal year 2018. The fiscal impact is for the cost of mailing notifications and return cards regarding political party registration to the approximately 5.2 million active voters, as required by the bill. The expected impact is based on mailing 5.2 million notifications to active voters at a cost of \$0.45 per notification (including printing and postage) in addition to postage costs of \$0.465

for each returned card indicating party registration choice, assuming a 60 percent rate of return. Outgoing mail is expected to receive a discounted postage rate of \$0.40, while return mail receives no discount and is expected to be \$0.465.

Additional costs that the agency may incur include updating instructions and guidance documents to include translation, changes to the Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS), Citizen Portal, pollbook software and, if needed, changes to web materials, printing and distribution of forms, additional support for staff to research Code sections and update forms impacted by the legislation, and training to assure officers of election and voters are aware of any changes.

9. Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected: Virginia Department of Elections, State Board of Elections, general registrars, and localities.

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: No

11. Other Comments: None

Date: 1/30/2017

File: SB902.doc