

Department of Planning and Budget

2021 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. Bill Number: HB2278

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

2. Patron: Davis

3. Committee: Privileges and Elections

4. Title: Voter registration; political party affiliation; closed primary elections.

5. Summary: Adds political party affiliation to the information that an applicant is asked to provide when registering to vote. The political party affiliation or independent status selected by the voter is included in his registration record, and the bill permits voters to change political party affiliation by providing notice in writing or through electronic means authorized by the State Board of Election. The bill provides that only voters who are registered as affiliated with a political party, or who are designated as independent, are permitted to vote in that political party's primary election. Voters who are registered on or before January 1, 2022, will be designated as independent, and the general registrars are required to notify the voters of such fact and include instructions on how the voter may change his affiliation beginning January 1, 2022. The bill has a delayed effective date of January 1, 2022.

6. Budget Amendment Necessary: Yes – Item 86

7. Fiscal Impact Estimates: Preliminary; see Item 8.

8. Fiscal Implications:

Department of Elections:

The legislation would require changes to the Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS), Citizen Portal, and poll book software to incorporate voter political party affiliation. The Department of Elections (ELECT) expects that the agency and local general registrars would also likely need to conduct an education campaign to adequately inform voters of the proposed legislative changes.

ELECT's preliminary estimate of the one-time cost to make the required systems changes is \$67,600 based on an estimated 520 hours at \$130.00 per hour provided by contractors. ELECT currently has limited capacity to absorb the additional workload with its current staffing levels. This estimate does not include any costs for an education campaign to inform voters of the proposed legislative changes.

Department of Motor Vehicles:

This bill would require an update to the voter registration application, which affects the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) because of the Motor Voter process. DMV offers the opportunity to register to vote to every customer who conducts certain transactions. These Motor Voter transactions include applying for, renewing, or replacing a driver's license or special identification card, or changing an address. DMV offers the opportunity to register to vote through these transactions online, in person, and through the mail.

The legislation would require DMV to update its online and in-person electronic motor voter (EMV) systems in order to include the political party affiliation or independent status question. DMV estimates making the appropriate system programming changes will cost \$44,933. The 622 staff hours required can be accomplished during the normal work schedules for DMV employees, given current workloads.

Localities:

Any potential costs associated with the requirement for general registrars to send registered voters notice that they will be designated in the Virginia voter registration system as independent on or before December 1, 2021, and to inform them of their ability to change their political party affiliation beginning on January 1, 2022, and instructions for doing so are indeterminate and would be the responsibility of localities.

- 9. Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected:** Virginia Department of Elections, State Board of Elections, Department of Motor Vehicles, General Registrars, and localities.

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: No.

11. Other Comments: None.

Date: 1/25/2021