

Department of Planning and Budget

2016 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. Bill Number: SB188-S1

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

2. Patron: Miller

3. Committee: Privileges and Elections

4. Title: Elections; absentee voting by persons age 65 or older.

5. Summary: Entitles persons who will be age 65 or older on the date of an election for which an absentee ballot is requested to vote absentee. This bill incorporates SB68, SB143, and SB320.

6. Budget Amendment Necessary: No

7. Fiscal Impact Estimates: Preliminary – see Item 8

8. Fiscal Implications: This bill would require an update to the Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS) to establish a new reason code (category) to identify voters 65 years or older to vote absentee, and update absentee forms, reports, and other VERIS functionality to accommodate the new reason code (category). The Department of Elections estimates the cost to be \$8,814: \$2,500 for changes to VERIS; \$2,200 for changes to forms, web materials, and guidance documents; and \$4,114 to print and distribute new forms.

As stand-alone legislation, the Department of Elections considers implementation of this bill as “routine,” and does not require additional funding. The Department of Elections will review all electoral legislation likely to be enacted prior to the passage by each house. If the aggregate number of “routine” bills likely to pass either house is unusually large, it is possible that the Department of Elections will require additional resources. If so, the Department of Elections will identify the costs at that time.

Localities may also experience an increase in the total cost of processing the absentee ballots at the local registrar’s office: increased staff time would be needed to process in person applicants and to review and issue ballots in response to applications submitted other than in person. The cost of mailing an absentee ballot varies depending on volume and whether the locality utilizes the new no cost certificate of mailing option authorized in a 2015 agency bill. Mailing an absentee ballot with a certificate of mailing purchased from USPS costs an estimated \$1.84.

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

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: No

11. Other Comments: The substitute version of Senate Bill 188 incorporates Senate Bill 68 (Wexton), Senate Bill 143 (Edwards), and Senate Bill 320 (Barker). These bills are identical; therefore, the fiscal impact did not change.