

Department of Planning and Budget 2017 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. **Bill Number:** SB845

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

2. **Patron:** Howell

3. **Committee:** Privileges and Elections

4. **Title:** Absentee voting; eligibility of certain caregivers.

5. **Summary:** Entitles a person to vote absentee if the person is unable to go in person to the polls on the day of the election because he is primarily and personally responsible for the care of an ill or disabled individual who is confined at home. Currently, such caregivers are entitled to vote absentee only if the ill or disabled individual who is confined at home is a family member of the caregiver.

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 modify an existing reason code (category) to identify voters who are unable to vote in-person on the day of the election because they are primarily and personally responsible for the care of an ill or disabled individual are eligible to vote absentee. Under current law, the ill or disabled individual must be a family member of the caregiver. The agency would also have to update absentee forms, reports, and other VERIS functionality to accommodate the modified reason code. The Department of Elections estimates the cost of these updates 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, such as increased staff time needed to process in-person applicants and to review and issue ballots in response to applications submitted other than in person.

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

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: No.

11. Other Comments: This bill is a companion to House Bill 1603 (Sullivan).