

Commission on Local Government

Estimate of Local Fiscal Impact

2020 General Assembly Session

Bill: SB111

Patron: Howell

Date: 1/30/2020

In accordance with the provisions of §30-19.03 of the Code of Virginia, the staff of the Commission on Local Government offers the following analysis of the above-referenced legislation:

Bill Summary:

Absentee voting; no excuse required. Permits any registered voter to vote by absentee ballot in any election in which he is qualified to vote. The bill removes the current list of statutory reasons under which a person may be entitled to vote by absentee ballot and removes references to those reasons from other sections of the Code.

Please note that this is a companion bill for HB1.

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**Executive Summary:**

Localities have evaluated a negative fiscal impact ranging from \$0.00 - \$716,420.00. A majority of localities noted that the bill would require additional voting equipment with associated firmware and warranties, warehouse modification for no excuse early voting, additional storage units, additional staffing, advertising, supplies, mailing of absentee ballots, and satellite offices. One locality that provided the highest estimated cost noted that their estimate is based upon actual costs/data from a similar jurisdiction in a state that has authorized early voting/no-excuse absentee voting. Of those localities that responded with no cost, noted that they are towns and not responsible for voting registrar duties.

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**Local Analysis:**

**Locality:** City of Emporia

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$50,000.00

We estimate the fiscal impact to be at least 50,000 in equipment, personnel, and maintenance costs. Additional personnel will be needed to ensure every vote is counted. This would further require additional machines for counting absentee ballots prior to the general election. Addition staff will be needed to ensure voting privileges are exercised in accordance with the law and that votes are not duplicated where an individual may have more than one address in multiple States.

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Locality: City of Roanoke

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$47,744.00

For the City of Roanoke, per discussion with our Registrar, below is a rough estimate of costs for no-excuse early voting. Please note this is only for the early voting part. There are several other things imbedded in this bill such as counting of late ballots that could entail additional costs. Once guidance on this is received from ELECT, costs could be higher. We do not imagine costs being any lower than what we show below.

- Annual Firmware and Warranty for 2 new pieces of voting equipment \$580
- Secured Glass Doors in Main Hall of our Registrar's Office (a 1-Time Cost) \$4,750
- Two new pieces of Voting Equipment (1-Time Cost) \$12,230
- Warehouse Modification Needs at our Registrar's Office for No Excuse Early Voting (1-Time Cost) \$10,000
- Additional Storage Units needed to house equipment \$2,472
- Additional temporary staffing needs \$17,712
- TOTAL \$47,744

Locality: City of Virginia Beach

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$716,420.00

Our costs are based upon data from Forsyth County, North Carolina, a regionally similar jurisdiction in a state that has authorized early voting / no-excuse absentee voting. Using Forsyth's actual costs (Roughly \$500,000), increased due to Virginia Beach having 50,000 more voters and because the window of time in Virginia would be longer than the limited amount of time allowed in North Carolina, we estimate the cost to Virginia Beach as \$716,420 for a presidential election cycle. The reason for this cost increase is the need for additional office temporary staff due the 45 day window, equipment rental, advertising, and supplies. In contrast, the cost of election day pollworkers would decrease due to less demand on Election Day itself.

Locality: City of Winchester

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$18,000.00

SB 111 and HB 1 – Increased local costs: about \$18,000 No excuse Early Voting for all 45 Days. No excuse absentee by mail.
Temp help in the office would increase at least \$10,000
Other costs yet to be determined as mentioned in recent email to Management and Facilities, as now we would have 45 days of being open to voting for ALL voters, not just voters with absentee excuses.
Parking and street signs \$1500
Building signage \$500
Customer Service Window - \$5300 estimate
Many localities are having to add satellite office. Fortunately it seems Winchester will not have to, but we still need to address space needs with city and facilities management to achieve this as efficiently as possible.

Locality: Prince Edward County

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$85,920.00

This bill would result in a vast increase in the number of absentee voters, We would have to buy 2 new voting machines (\$12,400) and one additional machine for handicap voters (\$5,000) one new laptop for poll workers (\$1,000) and a cage to place the voting machines for security (\$2,000) for a total one-time equipment cost of \$20,400. Assuming a 45 day calendar window for absentee voting which is actually 33 days of voting and the large increase in the numbers voting absentee I assumed we will need 5 additional poll workers for 16 days at 8 hours per day at a cost of \$11.25 per hour for a cost of \$7,200 for the first 16 days. The last 17 days of voting would see an increase in the numbers voting requiring another poll worker for a total of 6 at 8 hours per day at a cost of \$11,25 for a cost of \$9,180 for a total personnel cost of \$16,380. Assuming 4 elections/primaries each year the total annual personnel cost will be \$65,520.

Locality: Town of Blacksburg

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

The Town does not have responsibility for voting registrar.

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**Locality:** Town of Marion.

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$0.00

County function; no anticipated financial impact to town government

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Locality: Town of Scottsville

Estimated Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

There would be no direct budget impact upon small towns. Small towns do not administer their own elections, but rather contract with county voter registrars. The bill would likely increase absentee voting and early voting, but registrars typically do not bill towns for services on a per-voter basis.

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**Locality:** Wise County

**Estimated Fiscal Impact:** \$129,049.20

- One Time Costs - \$80,060.00
  - Staffing Costs - \$44,629.20
  - By-Mail Costs - \$4,360.00
  - Total Minimum Estimated Costs - \$129,049.20
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