



SOUTH CAROLINA REVENUE AND FISCAL AFFAIRS OFFICE
STATEMENT OF ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT
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Bill Number: H. 3150 Signed by Governor on May 4, 2017
Author: Funderburk
Subject: Municipal Elections
Requestor: House of Representatives
RFA Analyst(s): Kokolis and Heineman
Impact Date: January 3, 2018

Estimate of Fiscal Impact

	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19
State Expenditure		
General Fund	\$0	\$0
Other and Federal	\$0	\$0
Full-Time Equivalent Position(s)	0.00	0.00
State Revenue		
General Fund	\$0	\$0
Other and Federal	\$0	\$0
Local Expenditure	Undetermined	\$0
Local Revenue	\$0	\$0

Fiscal Impact Summary

This bill will have no expenditure impact to the General Fund, Other Funds, or Federal Funds. The expenditure impact on local election authorities is undetermined due to the high variance in costs reported by the responding county election commissions.

Explanation of Fiscal Impact

Signed by Governor on May 4, 2017

State Expenditure

Currently, under certain circumstances, a special election is not required to fill an office that has become vacant due to death, resignation, or removal. For vacancies filled by special election, the election is not required if fourteen days have elapsed since filing for the office closed, only one person filed, and no one has declared his or her candidacy as a write-in candidate. Previously, the one candidate who filed is deemed elected. The current bill eliminates the ability to forego the election process in the instances described above; thereby requiring a special election. This change applies to elections for which candidate filings begin on or after January 1, 2018.

In partisan elections, filing by these candidates shall open on the third Friday after the vacancy occurs and close eight days later, instead of ten days later. The special election must be held on the twentieth Tuesday instead of the eighteenth Tuesday after the vacancy occurs. This change applies to elections for which candidate filings begin on or after the Governor’s approval of this bill.

For a federal special election for which the primary is held on May 2, 2017, (the primary for the United States House of Representatives District Five) the State Election Commission must provide a rank choice ballot to an individual who casts a ballot in accordance with the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act. This act established absentee voting requirements for federal offices for service members, their eligible family members, and other overseas citizens.

Election Commission. The commission indicates that this bill will result in more elections. Most of these elections are municipal general and special elections; thus municipalities will bear the cost. Although rare, county-level special elections can occur; thus the county will bear the cost of these elections. Another rare occurrence would be state-level special elections. There has only been one state-level special election cancelled in this manner in the past fourteen years. The commission indicates the expenditure impact is minimal and can be absorbed within current resources.

State Revenue

N/A

Local Expenditure

Municipalities and counties must hold both special and general elections for vacant positions even when there is no opponent running for the vacancy. Most of these elections are special elections at the municipal level, and municipalities bear the cost of these elections. Although rare, special elections can also occur with county-level special elections, and the county will bear the cost of these elections.

The Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office contacted all forty-six counties regarding the expenditure impact of this bill. Six counties responded. Oconee County indicates that before this law was passed they saved substantially by not holding special elections when only one candidate filed for running for a vacant seat. A special election countywide would cost \$28,000 with a partial reimbursement from the State Election Commission only if the election is partisan. A less than countywide special election would cost less but the amount is undermined since it depends on how many polling locations would be used. A municipal special election would cost \$3,000 and the county would be reimbursed by the municipality. Additionally, there are undetermined costs for a domino effect of special elections where one vacancy occurs and the candidate is already holding another office. This scenario causes there to be two vacancies which means multiple special elections to fill each position.

Cherokee County indicates each single member district election costs \$1,100 and citywide elections for the City of Gaffney and the Town of Blacksburg cost \$5,500. Florence County indicates there will be no impact. Charleston County indicates it would incur additional costs for municipal elections that would be reimbursed by the municipalities; however, a specific cost is undetermined.

Lancaster County indicates the total cost for special elections is undetermined since it depends on the number of poll workers required at each precinct and the type of special election.

Lancaster County specifies that each poll worker costs \$180 and each clerk costs \$240. Polling

locations generally require at least six poll workers. Therefore, one precinct would cost \$1,320, which includes one clerk. If all precincts are open, Lancaster County utilizes six machine technicians who are paid \$200 per day plus mileage. The estimated cost of utilizing all six technicians without mileage is \$1,200 per day. In addition to staffing precincts with poll workers, clerks, and machine technicians Lancaster County also employs temporary office staff. The county generally employs three temporary office staff at a cost of \$400 per week. Assuming one week of work, the total cost of three temporary office staff is \$1,200. The temporary office staff are also eligible for overtime and this cost can range from \$800 to \$1000 per election. This number can be higher depending on the number of absentee voters making absentee requests. Further, the county has election night staff and the cost of these staff members ranges between \$1,000 and \$1,500 depending on the size of the election. Lunches are provided to all staff and the estimated cost ranges between \$800 and \$1,200 depending on the size of the election. For each election, the County is required is to publish a notice of elections in the local newspapers and the notices cost \$400.

Barnwell County indicates they have seven municipalities and currently conduct all elections on the same day. The cost to hold elections for all seven municipalities under current provisions is \$9,500. The number of precincts in Barnwell County vary from one in some municipalities to four in others. The variability means the cost of elections can vary by the number of precincts. Barnwell County anticipates a countywide election would range in cost between \$10,000 and \$11,500 and a County Council election would range in cost between \$3,300 and \$5,500.

Based on the responses received, the expenditure impact for holding special elections is undetermined due to the high variance in costs reported by the responding county election commissions. Given the high variance, the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office cannot accurately project the additional cost for all forty-six counties.

Local Revenue

N/A



Frank A. Rainwater, Executive Director