

Multiple Agency Fiscal Note Summary

Bill Number: 1475 HB	Title: Online ballot portal
-----------------------------	------------------------------------

Estimated Cash Receipts

NONE

Agency Name	2023-25		2025-27		2027-29	
	GF- State	Total	GF- State	Total	GF- State	Total
Local Gov. Courts						
Loc School dist-SPI						
Local Gov. Other	Non-zero but indeterminate cost and/or savings. Please see discussion.					
Local Gov. Total						

Estimated Operating Expenditures

Agency Name	2023-25				2025-27				2027-29			
	FTEs	GF-State	NGF-Outlook	Total	FTEs	GF-State	NGF-Outlook	Total	FTEs	GF-State	NGF-Outlook	Total
Office of the Secretary of State	Fiscal note not available											
Consolidated Technology Services	Fiscal note not available											
Total \$	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0

Agency Name	2023-25			2025-27			2027-29		
	FTEs	GF-State	Total	FTEs	GF-State	Total	FTEs	GF-State	Total
Local Gov. Courts									
Loc School dist-SPI									
Local Gov. Other	Non-zero but indeterminate cost and/or savings. Please see discussion.								
Local Gov. Total									

Estimated Capital Budget Expenditures

Agency Name	2023-25			2025-27			2027-29		
	FTEs	Bonds	Total	FTEs	Bonds	Total	FTEs	Bonds	Total
Office of the Secretary of State	Fiscal note not available								
Consolidated Technology Services	Fiscal note not available								
Total \$	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0

Agency Name	2023-25			2025-27			2027-29		
	FTEs	GF-State	Total	FTEs	GF-State	Total	FTEs	GF-State	Total
Local Gov. Courts									
Loc School dist-SPI									
Local Gov. Other	Non-zero but indeterminate cost and/or savings. Please see discussion.								
Local Gov. Total									

Estimated Capital Budget Breakout

NONE

Prepared by: Gwen Stamey, OFM	Phone: (360) 790-1166	Date Published: Preliminary
--------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------------

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FISCAL NOTE

Department of Commerce

Bill Number: 1475 HB

Title: Online ballot portal

Part I: Jurisdiction-Location, type or status of political subdivision defines range of fiscal impacts.

Legislation Impacts:

- Cities: Cities participating in elections would experience proportionate increases in election costs relative to county auditors' increased election expenses.
- Counties: County auditors would incur indeterminate increased election expenditures due to screening online voted ballots. County revenue would increase in direct proportion to the auditor's increased election costs.
- Special Districts: Special districts participating in elections would experience proportionate increases in election costs relative to county auditors' increased election expenses.
- Specific jurisdictions only:
- Variance occurs due to: The number of online voted ballots that will be received in each election.

Part II: Estimates

- No fiscal impacts.
- Expenditures represent one-time costs: County auditors could incur one-time costs to develop procedures to screen online voted ballots.
- Legislation provides local option:
- Key variables cannot be estimated with certainty at this time: The amount of time auditors will require to screen online voted ballots; the total number of registered voters who will be eligible to use the online ballot portal.

Estimated revenue impacts to:

Non-zero but indeterminate cost and/or savings. Please see discussion.

Estimated expenditure impacts to:

Non-zero but indeterminate cost and/or savings. Please see discussion.

Part III: Preparation and Approval

Fiscal Note Analyst: Kate Fernald	Phone: 564-200-3519	Date: 01/25/2023
Leg. Committee Contact: Desiree Omli	Phone: 360-786-7105	Date: 01/22/2023
Agency Approval: Allan Johnson	Phone: 360-725-5033	Date: 01/25/2023
OFM Review: Gwen Stamey	Phone: (360) 790-1166	Date: 01/25/2023

Part IV: Analysis

A. SUMMARY OF BILL

Description of the bill with an emphasis on how it impacts local government.

Sec. 1 establishes the Secretary of State would consult with auditors to establish a statewide online ballot portal, which includes requirements for auditors specifically.

Sec. 1 (4) clarifies that the online ballot portal will only be available to three specific voters: overseas and service voters; disabled voters as defined under RCW 29A.04.037; and eligible voters currently serving a sentence. Additionally, service and overseas voters could return a voted ballot and signed declaration by fax or email.

Sec. 2 (4) defines that online ballot voters must be provided with instructions for: accessing their ballot; marking their ballot; and returning a voted ballot using an approved online ballot portal.

Sec. 3 (6) states that the county auditor shall establish procedures to maintain the secrecy of the ballot for online ballots they receive.

Sec. 4 (1) adds to the requirements that must be included in the county auditors' election reconciliation report. The phrase "online ballot portal" is added to any reconciliation report information required for overseas and service ballots (m-r).

B. SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE IMPACTS

Expenditure impacts of the legislation on local governments with the expenditure provisions identified by section number and when appropriate, the detail of expenditures. Delineated between city, county and special district impacts.

County auditors would likely experience an indeterminate increase in staffing expenditures due to screening online voted ballots for eligibility in each election. Additionally, cities, counties and special districts participating in each election would have their proportionate election costs impacted in the same indeterminate manner. The total number of eligible online voted ballots, the number of online voted ballots that will need to be screened in each election, and the screening procedures are not known, so the cost impacts are indeterminate.

ONLINE BALLOTS PROCESSES and PROCEDURES

Washington State Association of County Auditors (WSACA) reports that auditors were able to receive online voted ballots in the past. Therefore, most counties would already have processes and procedures for online voted ballots that could be adopted again. They do not anticipate a cost impact to establishing online ballot portal processes and procedures.

ELIGIBLE VOTERS

The total number of registered voters that would be eligible to use the online ballot portal is not known. Per the legislation, overseas and serving voters, voters who are disabled under RCW 29A.04.037, and eligible voters currently serving a sentence would qualify to use the online ballot portal. However, the Secretary of State does not have the requisite data to estimate the total number of voters that would be eligible to use the online ballot portal. Here is the data SOS does have:

- Overseas and serving voters: 99,581 active military or overseas voters
- Disabled under RCW 29A.04.037: unknown. Voters do not currently indicate any form of disability when registering to vote.
- Eligible people serving a sentence: unknown. SOS's data from the Department of Corrections is specifically related to individuals not eligible to vote due to an in-state felony.

Therefore, the number of registered voters that would be eligible to use the online ballot portal is not known.

SCREENING

The cost impact Washington State Association of County Auditors (WSACA) anticipates is for developing and performing procedures to screen the limited eligibility of online voted ballots. Increased costs for developing the screening procedures, and the time it will take to perform the screening procedures during each election is not known and could not be estimated.

Therefore the fiscal impact of developing and performing screening procedures is indeterminate.

Because cities, counties and special purpose districts participating in elections pay their proportionate share of election costs, any increased costs counties experience as a result of screening online voted ballots would proportionately impact cities, counties and special districts in the same indeterminate manner.

Note that the legislation does not define how county auditors will screen or audit online voted ballots, therefore the cost associated with this work is indeterminate.

For illustrative purposes, SHB 2614 (2018) laid out a process for auditing electronically returned ballots, however a fiscal note on that bill was not prepared. If the county received at least 40 electronically returned ballots, the county auditor would have been required to randomly select 25% of that group and request those voters to return their original ballot. The auditor would then have been required to analyze any of such ballots that were returned to ensure that the original matched the voted electronic ballot. If the auditor discovered any manipulation, alteration, or interception of the electronic ballot, then the auditor would be required to request that every electronic ballot voter return their original ballot and analyze each original ballot against the electronic version. SHB 2614 (2018) did not have a fiscal note completed, so county auditors' costs to implement the auditing requirements are unknown.

C. SUMMARY OF REVENUE IMPACTS

Revenue impacts of the legislation on local governments, with the revenue provisions identified by section number, and when appropriate, the detail of revenue sources. Delineated between city, county and special district impacts.

The legislation would result in indeterminate increases in county revenue directly proportionate to county auditors' increased costs to screen online voted ballots.

The legislation would increase county auditors' work to screen online voted ballots. Election costs are apportioned to all jurisdictions participating in the election. Therefore, county revenue received from participating jurisdictions for their proportionate share of election costs would be increased in direct proportion to the auditor's increased election costs. However, the exact revenue increase cannot be determined in advance. As a result counties will experience an indeterminate increase in revenue.

SOURCES:

Office of the Secretary of State

Washington Association of County Officials

Washington State Association of County Auditors