

BILL # SB 1309

TITLE: countywide early ballot requests

SPONSOR: Gerard

STATUS: As Amended by Senate Government

REQUESTED BY: Senate

PREPARED BY: Indya Kincannon

FISCAL YEAR

	2001	2002	2003
EXPENDITURES			
General Fund	\$-0-	\$-0-	\$782,400

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Description

This bill requires county recorders to mail an early ballot request form to every registered voter in the county no more than 90 days prior to the election. The form would allow voters to request an early ballot for the primary and general election and would be mailed by non-forwardable first class mail. The bill further requires the Secretary of State to reimburse county recorders for costs incurred pursuant to this act. The amended bill appropriates \$605,000 for this purpose. As amended, the bill also requires county recorders to use the early ballot request forms to help clean-up voter rolls, pursuant to existing law, and requires the officer in charge of early balloting to generate a daily list of people who have requested early ballots.

Estimated Impact

As amended, the bill appropriates \$605,000 from the General Fund in FY 2002 to the Secretary of State for the purpose of reimbursing counties for costs incurred pursuant to this act. The appropriation would be non-lapsing. Based on our cost estimates, we believe the appropriated amount is not sufficient to cover the costs associated with this bill. We estimate that an additional \$177,400 in General Fund monies would be needed to fully fund this bill, for a total cost of \$782,400. The costs would recur every other year and would vary depending on the number of registered voters and undeliverable forms. Furthermore, we project that county recorders will not require any reimbursement until FY 2003, which is the when the next election occurs. The appropriation is for FY 2002 in the bill.

Assumptions

This estimate assumes that the number of registered voters will grow by 2.5% from November 2000 forward, totaling 2,227,450 voters by the 2002 election. It is difficult to predict whether the number of registered voters will go up or down between now and 2004, or by how much. From 1996 to 2000, the number of registered voters declined by 9% despite overall increases in Arizona's population. The decline was due in part to clean-up of the voter rolls. Since November 2000, the number of registered voters has increased 1.7% from 2,173,122 to 2,210,617 voters. Our analysis assumes that the number of registered voters will grow by the same rate as population from 2001 forward. Therefore, we have used the Department of Economic Security's projection of 2.5% growth in Arizona's population as the basis for analysis.

According to the Secretary of State's Office, early ballot request forms will cost 9.5 cents each to print and 13.1 cents to mail using a special election non-profit postage rate. The Secretary of State's Office projects that 15% of the early ballot request forms will be returned as undeliverable. The postage to have the undeliverable forms returned to county recorders will be 34 cents each. In order to comply with voter roll clean-up laws, county recorders will then have to send a second follow-up mailing to all of the voters whose forms were returned as undeliverable. According to the Secretary of State's Office this follow-up postcard will cost 15.5 cents each to print and mail. The Secretary of State's Office projects that 100% of the

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Assumptions (Continued)

follow-up postcards will be returned as undeliverable. The postage to have the undeliverable postcards returned to county recorders will be 34 cents each. The table below details the costs.

FY 2003 Costs of SB 1309			
	<u>Unit Cost</u>	<u>Number of Voters</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Early Ballot Request Form</u>			
Printing	\$0.095	2,227,450	\$211,600
Postage	0.131	2,227,450	291,800
Postage to have 15% undeliverable forms returned to county recorders	0.34	<u>334,118</u>	<u>113,600</u>
SUBTOTAL			\$617,000
<u>Voter Roll Clean-Up Procedures</u>			
Follow-up card (printing & mailing)	\$0.155	334,118	\$51,800
Postage to have 100% undeliverable follow-up postcards returned to county recorders	0.34	<u>334,118</u>	<u>113,600</u>
SUBTOTAL			\$165,400
TOTAL			\$782,400

Based on a survey of county recorders, our estimate also assumes that counties already maintain lists of early ballot requestors and distribute such lists upon request to candidates. Most counties charge 5 cents per name or have a flat rate for the list to cover their printing and copying costs. As such, we assume that the provision requiring counties to make a daily list of early ballot requestors will have no fiscal impact. This estimate also assumes that candidates and political committees will comply with the provisions of the bill and not incur civil penalties.

Local Government Impact

The bill would require new expenditures by county recorders' offices in order to distribute early ballot request forms and conduct voter roll clean-up procedures. However, these expenditures would be fully reimbursable by the state and have no fiscal impact at the local level.

Amendments

As introduced, the bill contained a blank General Fund appropriation to the Secretary of State's Office in FY 2002. The Senate Government Committee amended the bill to insert \$605,000 into the blank appropriation, based on an estimate provided by the Secretary of State's Office. The Senate Government Committee also added language to require counties to generate a daily list of voters who have requested early ballots and to use the early ballot request forms as part of voter roll clean-up procedures, pursuant to existing law. None of the other amendments added by the Senate Government Committee affect the estimated fiscal impact of the bill.