

LRB – FISCAL REVIEW SECTION ANALYSIS

JUDICIARY AND LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

ITEM 12, FILE 050510

SEPTEMBER 19, 2005

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File #050510 is substitute resolution directing the Intergovernmental Relations Division – Department of Administration to seek introduction of state legislation necessary for implementing various recommendations of the City Election Task Force.

Background and Discussion

1. This substitute resolution directs the Intergovernmental Relations Division – Department of Administration to seek introduction and passage of state legislation necessary for implementing various recommendations of the City Election Task Force for improving the election system.
2. The 2004 General Election in Milwaukee challenged the voting process due to an unusually high voter turnout and record number of absentee voters. As a result, the Mayor formed the Election Task Force to study the City's election system and make recommendations for improvements. On June 27, 2005, a study was issued with various recommendations requiring a change in state legislation. With approval of this resolution, the Intergovernmental Relations Division will pursue the introduction and passage of the legislation changes to improve the City's election system.
3. The proposed recommendations for the Intergovernmental Relations Division, supported by the Board of Election Commissioners, include the following changes:
 - A. *Prohibit the compensation of deputy registrars on the number of registration cards completed by registrars.* The compensation is an incentive for error and fraud. If the quota system was eliminated, the financial incentive is eliminated.
 - B. *Establish an earlier "cut-off" date for voter pre-registration of 21 to 29 days prior to an election, in lieu of the current 13-day deadline.* Changing the deadline will allow the Election Commission to manage large number of voter registration cards, provide more time to resolve problems and reduce delays and errors in processing voter registration cards that are used to produce poll lists.
 - C. *Allow electors to vote (in-person) absentee at a "satellite" location. Current law requires that absentee voting occur at the Office of the City Clerk, designated to the Election Commission office.* The Election Commission office processes in-person voter registration, voter address change, revision or removal and voter absentee ballot at the same time, in a small "confined" area. A "satellite" location would allow the personnel to process more than one voter at a time.
 - D. *Allow for the processing of absentee ballots at a "satellite" location rather than at the polls.* Absentee ballots returned to the Election Commission office are sorted by ward, and on election day are delivered to the individual polling location, recorded and processed. This has caused confusion. At a "satellite" location, the staff would count all ballots, properly recording each absentee ballot with the voter, the ballot is recorded on the polling list before the list is prepared for election day.
 - E. *Advance the statutory deadline for voter submittal of absentee ballot request applications to at least 7 days prior to the election, in lieu of the current deadline of 5 p.m. on the Friday prior to an election.* The current Friday before election day cut-off date creates problems in processing the applications in a timely manner. The election staff uses U.S. Postal service, and many voters do not receive their ballots on time. With the 7 day cut-off, absentee ballot request applications can be processed more effectively, reducing time for confusion for the voter and the staff.

Fiscal Impact

1. There is no fiscal impact in this resolution.

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September 16, 2005