

COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
OVERSIGHT DIVISION

FISCAL NOTE

L.R. No.: 2198H.01I
Bill No.: HB 1055
Subject: Elections; County Officials
Type: Original
Date: April 13, 2025

Bill Summary: This proposal modifies provisions for curing absentee ballots.

FISCAL SUMMARY

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON GENERAL REVENUE FUND			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
General Revenue*	(Unknown)	(Unknown)	(Unknown)
Total Estimated Net Effect on General Revenue	(Unknown)	(Unknown)	(Unknown)

*Oversight notes there is a potential increase in proportional election costs during state elections, as well as the state potentially being required to cover these costs during non-state elections such as the general municipal election day (April election) each year. This cost could exceed the \$250,000 threshold.

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON OTHER STATE FUNDS			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Total Estimated Net Effect on <u>Other</u> State Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0

Numbers within parentheses: () indicate costs or losses.

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON FEDERAL FUNDS			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Total Estimated Net Effect on <u>All</u> Federal Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE)			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Total Estimated Net Effect on FTE	0	0	0

☒ Estimated Net Effect (expenditures or reduced revenues) expected to exceed \$250,000 in any of the three fiscal years after implementation of the act or at full implementation of the act.

☐ Estimated Net Effect (savings or increased revenues) expected to exceed \$250,000 in any of the three fiscal years after implementation of the act or at full implementation of the act.

ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON LOCAL FUNDS			
FUND AFFECTED	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Local Government	(Unknown)	(Unknown)	(Unknown)

FISCAL ANALYSIS

ASSUMPTION

Sections 115.295 and 115.300 – Absentee Ballots Curing

Officials from the **Office of the Secretary of State (SOS)** state this bill would require each local election authority to notify absentee voters whenever there is a deficiency in the absentee affidavit on their ballot envelope due to incomplete information or a lack of notarization where one is required. Such notice may be made by any or all viable means of communication, including physical mail, email, and telephone calls.

This is a new mandate which may need to be funded by the state under Article X, Section 21 of the Missouri Constitution. In most cases, emails or phone calls should not lead to a fiscal impact, however, any documents which are mailed physically would incur costs for printing and postage. This would lead to increased proportional election costs during state elections, as well as the state potentially being required to cover these costs during non-state elections such as the general municipal election day (April election) each year. The scope of such costs is unknown and will vary based on the number of mailings and the cost of each document mailed.

Oversight does not have any information to the contrary. Therefore, Oversight will reflect the estimated impact by SOS in the fiscal note.

Oversight requested from the SOS the number of absentee ballots that were rejected in the 2024 General Election, **SOS** provided that 5,238 ballots were rejected.

In addition, the **SOS** stated they don't have accurate information as to the cost of returned ballot postage that the State of Missouri reimburses to the local election authorities (LEAs). LEAs can combine up to two years' worth of reimbursements in a single payment request, which also includes municipal elections where the state doesn't have a race, but they still reimburse postage.

In response to similar legislation, SB 210 (2023), the **Oversight** requested from the SOS the number of absentee ballots that were rejected in the most current elections. **SOS** provided that they receive their absentee statistics from post-election surveys. They only do these for state-level elections so cannot provide a number for municipal elections. The reporting for the primary is currently incomplete as it had to be delayed due to other more urgent projects. However, for the general election their surveying was complete and there were 3,055 ballots rejected (including military/overseas).

Oversight notes that according to the SOS the below is the total for returned ballot postage that the State of Missouri has reimbursed to the local election authorities in the past five years.

2018	\$ 50,000
2019	\$ 100,484
2020	\$ 58,709
2021	\$ 477,017
2022	\$ 43,052

Officials from the **Jackson County Board of Elections** provide each absentee voter with detailed instructions that accompanies the voter's ballot they receive via mail. Instructions include how to properly vote the ballot and instructions for properly filling out and signing the envelope. Additionally, the Board instructs the voter on the absentee envelope if there is no need for notarization otherwise the instructions are clear notarization is needed.

Election authorities are understaffed especially during large elections and are occupied fulfilling the absentee requests that come in daily. Election authorities would require additional full-time staff if a law such as SB 606 passed.

Two Fulltime Staff Members - \$84,711.00

In most cases election authorities do not have access to a voter's email address or phone number. Election authorities would have no other option but to mail a notice via 1st class mail to the voter which generally takes 7 working days. Voters submitting their ballots less than two weeks before the election would not have the benefit of getting the rejection notice in a timely manner to cure their ballot and some might receive the notice after the date for submission of corrections.

Additional Postage for Notices - \$ 3,117.00

TOTAL \$87,828.00

Officials from the **St. Louis City Board of Elections** state for the 2025 General Election approximately 200 absentee ballots were rejected as a result of errors on the ballot envelope. Estimating it would take 15 minutes to contact each voter, this would be 50 hours. If an Election Board employee being paid \$15/hour was paid to do this work, the estimated fiscal impact would be \$750.

Officials from the **St. Louis County Board of Elections** state depending on voter turnout, they see anywhere from roughly 200 to well over 1,000 absentee ballots might be rejected for lack of signature or lack of notarization per election. This legislation requires them to mail a notice to these voters. They estimate the total cost per letter, when factoring in postage, printing, and labor, to be \$1.66 per letter. For the April 2024 election, they would have spent \$280.54 on these letters. For November 2024, they would have spent \$2,177.92.

In SB 606 officials from the **Johnson County Clerk** state there would likely be minimal impact (less than \$150 per election) to Johnson County in the way of additional postage cost to notify voters of missing information on their absentee ballot envelope.

Officials from the **Platte County Board of Elections** assume the proposal will have no fiscal impact on their respective organization.

Oversight notes there is a potential increase in cost to local election authorities for postage, printing and staff time to rectify absentee ballot rejections. Oversight is unable to determine how many individuals will cast an absentee ballot or how many absentee ballots will be rejected; therefore, Oversight will reflect a potential unknown cost to local election authorities.

<u>FISCAL IMPACT – State Government</u>	FY 2026 (10 Mo.)	FY 2027	FY 2028
GENERAL REVENUE			
<u>Cost – SOS – reimbursement to LEA’s for postage, printing and processing absentee ballot rejections</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>
ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON GENERAL REVENUE	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>

<u>FISCAL IMPACT – Local Government</u>	FY 2026 (10 Mo.)	FY 2027	FY 2028
LOCAL ELECTION AUTHORTIES			
<u>Cost – postage, printing and processing absentee ballot rejections</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>
ESTIMATED NET EFFECT ON LOCAL ELECTION AUTHORTIES	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>	<u>(Unknown)</u>

FISCAL IMPACT – Small Business

No direct fiscal impact to small businesses would be expected as a result of this proposal.

FISCAL DESCRIPTION

Currently, absentee ballots received by the election authority must be rejected if the statements on the ballot envelope have not been completed.

This bill creates a process for voters to provide missing information on an absentee ballot envelope received by an election authority prior to the date of the polls closing on election day in order to allow the voter's ballot to be counted.

The election authority must attempt to notify a voter of an incomplete absentee ballot envelope by all reasonable means. The notice will describe the missing information and instructions for how the voter can provide that information.

The election authority will allow the voter to provide the missing information by completing a new absentee voter statement and delivering it to the election authority.

Only an employee of the election authority can contact the voter about missing absentee ballot envelope information. A voter can provide the missing information only after the envelope has been received by the election authority.

If the voter provides the missing information before polls close on election day, the ballot will be accepted and counted. If not, the ballot will be rejected.

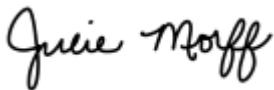
Currently, election authorities can begin preparation of absentee ballots for tabulation on election day no earlier than the fifth day prior to the election.

This bill would allow election authorities to begin preparation of

This legislation is not federally mandated, would not duplicate any other program and would not require additional capital improvements or rental space.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Office of the Secretary of State
Jackson County Election Board
Platte County Board of Elections
St. Louis City Board of Elections
St. Louis County Board of Elections
Johnson County Clerk



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April 13, 2025



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