

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 3815

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 4, 2026

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 3815.

As reported, this bill requires the Secretary of State to establish a public awareness campaign concerning the federal rules defining the United States Postal Service (USPS) postmark and its potential impacts on the postmark of mail-in ballots.

In December 2025, the USPS finalized a rule establishing section 608.11 of the Domestic Mail Manual, which defines the meaning of a postmark, identifies the types of USPS markings that qualify as postmarks, and describes the circumstances under which those markings are applied. Given that the date postmarked on a mailed item may be later than when the mail is first received by the USPS, the rule also advises customers on how to obtain evidence of the date on which the USPS accepts possession of their mail, including requesting a free, manual postmark. Although the USPS advises that the language in the manual does not change any existing postal operations or postmarking practices, the new language is intended to advance public understanding of postmarks and their relationship to the date of mailing.

The bill requires the Secretary of State to develop and implement a public awareness campaign regarding the impacts of postmark dates on mail-in ballots through the department's Internet website and media outlets, which will include, but not be limited to: Statewide newspapers, radio, public service announcements, social media, and television advertisements.

Under current law, every mail-in ballot that bears a postmark date before or of the day of election and that is received by the county board within 144 hours after the time of the closing of the polls is considered valid and canvassed. The public awareness campaign will inform the public of the risk of a mail-in ballot not being accepted if it is postmarked after election day, despite being mailed by election day. A voter has the option to request a manual postmark to ensure the mail-in ballot is postmarked by election day. The campaign will also inform the public that voters may deposit their mail-in ballots in ballot drop boxes without being impacted by the USPS postmark processes.

The bill requires the Secretary of State, in collaboration with all county boards of elections in the State, to assess ballot drop box

placement in each county and evaluate the usage of such drop boxes to ensure their placement meets the current needs of voters. Based on the evaluation, the secretary is required to issue a report to the Governor and the Legislature concerning any statutory changes deemed necessary to the current law, including changes to the number and location of ballot drop boxes.

The bill also appropriates \$100,000 from the General Fund to the Department of State to develop and implement the public awareness campaign.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) anticipates that requiring the Department of State to develop a public awareness campaign about the impacts of postmark dates on mail-in ballots and to assess and evaluate ballot drop box placement in each county would increase State expenditures by up to \$100,000 in the year following the bill's passage.

Any activity that results in increased workloads for county boards of elections might also increase local government expenditures by an indeterminate amount, for which local government revenues might also increase by a corresponding indeterminate amount if any part of the expenditure increase is eligible for reimbursement by the State.