

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 589

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 6, 2020

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 589 (1R), with committee amendments.

As amended by the committee, this bill requires the Secretary of State to maintain a secure Internet website to allow eligible voters to register to vote using an online voter registration form. The bill also authorizes the use of digitized signatures from the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission's database, or the applicant's digitized or electronic signature, in connection with online voter registration forms.

Under the bill, the Secretary of State must employ security measures to ensure the accuracy and integrity of voter registration forms submitted electronically. An applicant may submit the voter registration form online if the applicant has an email address and provides a valid New Jersey driver's license or non-driver identification card number or the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security number. The system must automatically acknowledge that the online voter registration form has been submitted successfully, and provide instructions on how the person completing the voter registration form may follow-up on the status of the submission either online or by contacting the appropriate county commissioner of registration.

Under the bill, an applicant completing the online voter registration form must affirmatively attest to the truth of the information provided therein, and affirmatively assent to the use the applicant's signature on the driver's license or non-driver identification card, or the applicant's digitized or electronic signature. For each online voter registration form, the secretary must obtain an electronic copy of the applicant's signature from the driver's license or non-driver identification card directly from the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, or the applicant's digitized or electronic signature. The secretary would apply the same voter registration deadlines applicable under current law for paper voter registration to online voter registration forms submitted pursuant to the bill.

The bill also provides that, if an applicant cannot electronically submit the identification information required, the applicant must

nevertheless be able to complete the online voter registration form electronically on the Secretary of State's Internet website, print a paper copy of the completed form, and mail or deliver the paper copy of the completed form to the Secretary of State or the appropriate county election official. In those cases, the applicant must provide the same identification and documents required under current law in connection with paper voter registration forms, as specified under R.S.19:31-5.

The information on the online voter registration forms would be electronically transferred by county commissioners of registration into the Statewide voter registration system already established by law.

The bill, as amended, requires the State to procure a qualified vendor to establish the online voter registration website and system ahead of the 2020 general election in November, and provides for an expedited procurement process to facilitate this implementation timeframe.

As amended and reported by the committee, Senate Bill No. 589 (1R) is identical to the Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly Bill No. 422, which was reported by the committee.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments:

(1) provide that the website will be maintained by the Secretary of State;

(2) allow for the use of the applicant's digitized or electronic signature;

(3) allow for the electronic submission of an online voter registration form if the applicant has an email address, and provides a valid New Jersey driver's license number or nondriver identification card number, or the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security number;

(4) remove language that would have required an applicant to submit a date of birth, in addition to a valid New Jersey driver's license number or nondriver identification card number, and the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security number;

(5) remove language that would have required the online voter registration system to have immediate verification capability of an applicant's submitted information;

(6) require the State to procure a qualified vendor to establish the online voter registration website and system ahead of the 2020 general election in November, and provide for an expedited procurement process to facilitate this implementation timeframe; and

(7) update section 4 to its current law version.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services notes that, according to an update of information previously provided by the Division of Elections in the Department of State for a fiscal note to an identical bill in 2014,

the implementation of the provisions of this bill to: (1) program the current Statewide Voter Registration System with an interactive voter registration form that can be completed by a registrant online and then submitted electronically to the appropriate county commissioner for approval; and (2) to program the Motor Vehicle Commission's computers to allow the use of digitized signatures from registrants who authorize the use of that signature for voter registration purposes while completing the online voter registration form, would cost approximately \$350,000 in the first year. To the extent that the online voter registration capability increases voter registration, county clerks' offices could experience higher costs to process and mail more sample ballots to new voters. These costs, however, are indeterminate.

Once the Statewide Voter Registration System is reprogrammed and the signatures are digitized, the cost to process each non-automated form manually will be reduced as voters use the online voter registration forms. Savings will result from not having to print, mail, and key stroke information into the system to accommodate non-automated registration forms. It is estimated that each online registration could save up to 51 cents per form.