



Ohio Legislative Service Commission

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Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

Bill: Am. Sub. S.J.R. 5 of the 128th G.A. **Date:** December 7, 2010

Status: In House Elections and Ethics **Sponsor:** Sen. Husted

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No — Not required for joint resolutions

Contents: Proposes a ballot initiative to revise the General Assembly and Congressional redistricting process

State Fiscal Highlights

- Should the resolution be adopted and the measure appear on the ballot for the May 3, 2011 primary, the state would incur all costs for holding a special election, which are paid from the GRF. County boards of elections operated approximately 9,900 precincts for the November 2010 general election. There would likely be substantially fewer precincts open for a statewide special election.
- The state would also incur costs for advertising the ballot language. The cost would depend on the length of the ballot measure. These costs are paid for by GRF transfers authorized by the Controlling Board to the Secretary of State's Statewide Ballot Advertising Fund (Fund 5FH0).

Local Fiscal Highlights

- Since this statewide issue would be placed on the May 3, 2011 ballot, the state would pay all associated costs of the election. Therefore, there are no additional costs to county boards of elections.

Detailed Fiscal Analysis

Redistricting changes

The resolution proposes changes to the Ohio Constitution that alter the redistricting process for General Assembly and Congressional districts, beginning in calendar year 2011. The question is to be put to voters at the May 3, 2011 primary. If approved by the voters, the current Apportionment Board would be replaced with the Ohio Redistricting Commission. The Commission would consist of seven members and be responsible for redrawing General Assembly and Congressional districts based upon the results of the decennial census. The Commission would consist of the following seven members: the Governor, the Auditor of State, the Secretary of State, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the legislative leader of the largest political party in the House of which the Speaker is not a member, the President of the Senate, and the legislative leader of the largest minority party in the Senate of which the Senate President is not a member. To be adopted, any redistricting plan would require a supermajority of five votes, including votes from at least two members of the Commission who are members of a political party other than the largest one represented on the Commission.

Elections costs

The bulk of the state expense for this statewide special election would be to reimburse county boards of elections for operating voting precincts. There were approximately 9,900 precincts open statewide for the general election in November 2010. Since there is generally reduced voter turnout for special elections as compared to general elections, county boards of elections would presumably reduce the number of precincts open for this particular issue. Based on information provided by the Secretary of State concerning special elections held to fill congressional seats in 2006, 2007, and 2008, the average per precinct operating cost was approximately \$1,000. Note that this per precinct average was based on a relatively small number of precincts in various counties.

There are a number of other factors that can affect the total cost of holding a statewide special election, mostly concerning staffing and precinct operating policies established by each county board of elections for each election. For a statewide special election on a ballot issue, because local boards of elections are likely to operate fewer precincts, there would presumably be fewer poll workers needed to oversee the election. Other variables affecting overall costs are the number of voting machines deployed and the number of provisional ballots that would need to be printed. All of these decisions will affect the overall cost the state would incur for holding a statewide special election.

Generally, for special elections, the affected counties conduct the election and submit a detailed expense report to the Secretary of State to receive reimbursement.

Under this procedure, the Secretary of State submits a request to the Controlling Board for the amount required. This would be paid from GRF appropriation item 911401, Emergency Purposes/Contingencies.

Ballot advertising costs

The state would also incur costs for ballot advertising under Article XVI, Section 1 of the Ohio Constitution, which requires that notice of ballot questions be published once a week for three consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in each Ohio county. The costs of advertising would depend on the length of the amendment proposed by this resolution. As a recent example, the combined newspaper advertising costs for the three issues which appeared on the November 2, 2009 general election ballot, were \$567,095. Because it is a single issue, the redistricting language would presumably cost considerably less than that amount to advertise statewide. To pay for these expenses, the Secretary of State submits a Controlling Board request to transfer the amount needed to cover advertising costs from either (1) GRF appropriation item 911401, Emergency Purposes/Contingencies or (2) GRF appropriation item 911441, Ballot Advertising Costs, to the Statewide Ballot Advertising Fund (Fund 5FH0). The amount expended for ballot advertising expenses was \$1.1 million in FY 2010. The amount appropriated for this purpose in FY 2011 is \$300,000.