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House Bill 5279 (Substitute S-1 as reported by the Committee of the Whole)
Sponsor: Representative Vincent Gregory
House Committee: Ethics and Elections
Senate Committee: Campaign and Election Oversight

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to do the following:

- Provide for voter registration application and absent voter application by an "absent uniformed services voter", rather than a member of the armed services, as well as an overseas voter (as currently provided).
- Allow an absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter to request an absent voter ballot to be transmitted electronically.
- Require local clerks to mail or electronically transmit an absent voter ballot, at least 45 days before an election, to each absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter who applied for a ballot at least 45 days before the election.
- Require each absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter to return a completed ballot by mail to the appropriate clerk.
- Require the Secretary of State to prescribe formats and transmission methods for electronic absent voter ballots.

The bill would define "absent uniformed services voter" as any of the following:

- A member of a uniformed service on active duty who, by reason of being on active duty, is absent from the place of residence where he or she is otherwise qualified to vote.
- A member of the merchant marine who, by reason of that service, is absent from the place of residence where he or she is otherwise qualified to vote.
- A spouse or dependent of either of the above who, by reason of the member's active duty or active service, is absent from the place of residence where the spouse or dependent is otherwise qualified to vote.

"Overseas voter" would mean any of the following:

- An absent uniformed services voter who, by reason of active duty or service, is absent from the U.S. on the date of an election.
- A person who lives outside of the U.S. and is qualified to vote in the last place in which he or she lived before leaving the U.S.
- A person living outside of the U.S. who, but for that residence, would be qualified to vote in the last place where he or she lived before leaving the U.S.

MCL 168.759a

Legislative Analyst: Patrick Affholter

FISCAL IMPACT

There could be an indeterminate cost to the Department of State associated with modifying ballot statements and absent voter ballot instructions; however, these costs should be minimal and absorbed within current funding levels.

Individual counties, cities, townships, or villages could see cost increases associated with mailing absent voter ballots. There also could be additional programming or technical costs for electronic transmission of ballots. These additional costs are indeterminate.

Date Completed: 3-18-10

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.