

ONLINE ABSENT VOTER BALLOT APPLICATION

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<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bill 4570 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Julie M. Rogers
Committee: Elections
Complete to 5-23-23

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4570 would amend the Michigan Election Law to allow registered and qualified voters to apply for an absentee ballot through an online system maintained by the secretary of state (SOS). Michigan currently offers an online absentee ballot application system, but it is not provided for in statute.¹

The bill would require SOS to maintain an online application portal that allows qualified and registered electors to request an absentee ballot for an election occurring in their city or township and that is in substantially the same form as the physical application.²

The online application would have to provide electors with the opportunity to use their stored digital signatures on file with SOS to complete the application. To allow an elector to use a stored digital signature, the application would have to verify their identity and voter registration status by requesting the following information:

- The elector's name, date of birth, and eye color.
- The elector's driver's license or state personal identification card number.
- The last four digits of the elector's Social Security number.

A registered elector whose digital signature is stored on file with the SOS in the Michigan Department of State's motor vehicle database would have to sign the online absentee ballot application with that digital signature. If an elector does not have a digital signature on file, they could upload a photo of their handwritten signature into the application system.

Once an online absentee ballot application is completed and signed, it would be sent through the Qualified Voter File (QVF) to the appropriate city or township clerk for processing. (The instructions provided on each absent voter ballot application would include a direction to send an application electronically through the QVF for processing if an applicant uses the online application.) A properly submitted online application would have to be processed and treated identically to a physical absentee ballot application with a handwritten signature.

MCL 168.759

¹ Michigan's online absentee voter application portal can be found here: <https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/avapplication>.

² An absentee ballot application template can be found here: <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/-/media/Project/Websites/sos/Elections/Election-Forms/Absent-Voter-Ballot-Application-Fillable.pdf?rev=1d0388a8c71a488ea108318d67d6074d&hash=F21FB6F3F3112DD20AD63A15A3DA6E4D>.

BACKGROUND:

As of 2022, 19 states, including Michigan, offered an online portal for absent voter ballot applications.³

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would result in additional technology programming costs to develop an online absent voter application system. The Department of State's ongoing appropriation for information technology may be sufficient to this additional cost but the cost has not yet been determined.

The bill would have no fiscal impact on local units of government.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

³ The full list of states can be found here: <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/table-6-states-with-online-absentee-ballot-application-portals>.