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BILL ANALYSIS

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House Bill 4570 (Substitute H-1 as passed by the House)
Sponsor: Representative Julie M. Rogers
House Committee: Elections
Senate Committee: Elections and Ethics

Date Completed: 10-25-23

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to require the Secretary of State (SOS) to provide and maintain an online absent voter ballot application that allowed qualified and registered electors to request an absent voter ballot for local elections. When signing and submitting the application, an elector could use a stored digital signature after verifying identifying information or a manual signature.

The SOS would have to provide and maintain an online absent voter ballot application that allowed a qualified and registered elector to request an absent voter ballot for an election occurring in that elector's city or township. The online absent voter ballot application would have to be in substantially the same form as the current absent voter ballot application.

The online absent voter ballot application provided and maintained by the SOS would have to provide an opportunity for an elector to use the elector's stored digital signature on file with the SOS on the online absent voter ballot application. "Stored digital signature" would mean the image of a registered elector's signature captured by the Department of State and maintained in the Department of State's motor vehicle database.

To allow an elector to use the elector's stored digital signature, the online absent voter ballot application would have to verify the elector's identity and registration status by requesting the elector's name, complete driver license or State personal identification card number, full date of birth, last four digits of the elector's Social Security number, and eye color.

A registered elector whose stored digital signature was on file with the SOS would have to sign the online absent voter ballot application with that stored digital signature. A registered elector without a stored digital signature could provide a manual digital signature by uploading a photograph of the registered elector's physical handwritten signature to the online absent voter ballot application. A completed online absent voter ballot application, including digital signature, would have to be sent electronically through the qualified voter file to the appropriate city or township clerk for processing. An online absent voter ballot application signed using a stored digital signature or manual digital signature would have to be processed and treated identically as an absent voter ballot application signed with a physical handwritten signature.

The Law requires certain instructions to be included with each absent voter ballot application furnished to each applicant. The bill would add the following to the set of instructions concerning the return of a completed application: "If the applicant applies using the online absent voter ballot application as provided by the SOS, send the application electronically through the qualified voter file to the appropriate city or township clerk for processing."

MCL 168.759

PREVIOUS LEGISLATION

(This section does not provide a comprehensive account of previous legislative efforts on this subject matter.)

The bill is similar to House Bill 5945 of the 2021-2022 Legislative Session.

Legislative Analyst: Abby Schneider

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 for this additional cost but the cost has not yet been determined. The bill would have no fiscal impact on local units of government.

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco, Jr.