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BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Fiscal Agency

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House Bill 4482 (as reported without amendment)

Sponsor: Representative Victor C. Krause

House Committee: Elections

Senate Committee: Local Government and Veterans

Date Completed: 5-18-87

RATIONALE

Under a 1978 amendment to the Michigan Election Law, election commissions of cities, villages, and townships may authorize clerks of those localities to use registration lists instead of precinct registration files at elections. These registration lists contain in alphabetical order the name, address, and birth date of each registered elector in the precinct. The registration files, on the other hand, contain cards that include similar information that is found on the lists as well as the voter's signature. Some localities have replaced registration files with registration lists, which can be computerized, as an administrative convenience so election officials at the polls do not have to work with the bulky files. Reportedly, some school districts also are using registration lists at elections, even though the election law does not specifically permit this practice for school districts. The election law should be amended, some people believe, to give school districts and intermediate school districts the same authority that cities, villages, and townships now have to use registration lists instead of registration files at elections.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to allow a school district or an intermediate school district to use a registration list instead of the precinct registration file whenever a precinct registration file is required.

(The registration list contains, in alphabetical order, the name of each registered elector in a precinct followed by the address and birth date of the elector.)

MCL 168.501a

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

ARGUMENTS**Supporting Argument**

The bill would establish consistency in procedures at polling sites. Cities, villages, and townships currently can use voter registration lists in place of voter registration card files. The bill simply would give intermediate and local school districts the same authority to use computerized voter registration lists for checking voters at the polls that cities, villages, and townships now have.

Supporting Argument

Being able to create, maintain, and transport to polling sites the voter registration lists instead of registration card files would be more efficient. In addition, computer

generated lists are considered to be more accurate than cards, which sometimes can be misfiled.

Response: Even though school districts would not have to take registration files to the polling precincts under the bill, school districts still would have to verify signatures on candidate nominating petitions and absentee ballot requests, as required in the School Code and the election law, according to election officials in the Department of State. Therefore, local school districts still would have to maintain a registration file or have access to a registration file that was maintained by a city, village, or township.

Opposing Argument

Without a voter registration file, there would be no registration card available to compare a voter's signature and verify the identity of the person who was applying to vote, since the card contains the registered voter's signature but the registration lists do not. Before voting, a voter signs an application to vote. Currently, when the signature on the application is challenged at the polling place, it can be compared to the signature on the voter registration card that is in the file at the precinct. Allowing school districts to use only computer lists at the polls would remove the ability of election officials to verify signatures, which is a safeguard against voter fraud.

Response: A verification process that is used with registration lists includes checking the birth date on the application against the date on the registration list. This verification process has been demonstrated to be adequate for cities, villages, and townships.

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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.

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