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BILL ANALYSIS



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Senate Bill 13 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Senator Marty Knollenberg
Committee: Elections and Government Reform

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to delete provisions that allow voters to cast a "straight ticket" or a "split ticket" in the partisan section of the general election ballot; and to prohibit ballot labels in partisan elections from including a position allowing electors to vote for all of the candidates of one party by a single selection.

The Election Law requires specific ballot marking instructions to be printed on the front of the ballot secrecy sleeve, or placed in a clear pocket on the front of the ballot secrecy sleeve, used at a general election. The partisan section of these instructions states that the voter may cast a "straight ticket", a "split ticket", or a "mixed ticket". Under the bill, the ballot instructions for the partisan section would have to allow a voter to cast only a mixed ticket.

In partisan elections, the Election Law requires the ballot label to include a position by which the voter may, by a single selection, record a straight party ticket vote for all the candidates of one party. The Law also allows a voter to vote a split or mixed ticket. The bill would delete these provisions.

Instead, in partisan elections, the bill would prohibit a ballot label from including a position by which a voter could, by a single selection, record a straight party ticket vote for all the candidates of one party.

MCL 168.736c et al.

Legislative Analyst: Suzanne Lowe

FISCAL IMPACT

State: The bill would result in an indeterminate cost for the Department of State, specifically the Bureau of Elections. The proposed changes regarding voting instructions and the elimination of straight-ticket and split-ticket voting would require the Department to revise its education and training of county clerks and staff. The costs of the education and training are indeterminate and would depend on the materials that could need to be purchased and the number of trainings conducted with county clerks across the State. Depending on the costs, the Department could need additional appropriations to carry out the education and training that would become necessary if the bill were enacted.

Local: The bill would lead to new printing costs for local units of government due to the changes to the general election ballot marking instructions. Although many local units of government already might have these instructions printed and use them for each general election, those instructions would no longer meet the requirements of the proposed changes and thus new ballot marking instructions would need to be printed. The related costs, which would be incurred by the local units of government, are indeterminate and would depend on the number of ballot instructions printed, etc. County clerks also could incur an indeterminate

amount of additional costs for training local clerks and staff based on the new education and training received from the Department of State.

In addition, according to the Department of State, the proposed changes, in particular the elimination of straight- and split-ticket voting, could cause an increase in the time it takes to vote due to the voters' reading the new instructions as well as having to mark their vote for each candidate, rather using the straight-ticket voting option that would no longer be available. As a result, it could become necessary for local units of government to purchase additional voting booths, which would be a cost to the local units.

Date Completed: 11-10-15

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco

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