

QUALIFIED VOTER FILE VERIFICATION

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House Bill 5646 (H-1) as reported from committee

Sponsor: Rep. Julie Calley

Committee: Elections and Ethics

Complete to 3-12-18

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

BRIEF SUMMARY:

House Bill 5646 would amend the Michigan Election Law to require the Secretary of State to develop a process for comparing the state's list of registered voters against the database of death records maintained by the federal Social Security system. The bill would also require the Secretary of State to participate in certain multistate voter registration verification programs.

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 5646 would have no significant fiscal impact on the Department of State, state government, or local units of government.

DETAILED SUMMARY:

The Michigan Qualified Voter File (QVF) was mandated by Public Act 441 of 1994 and implemented January 1, 1998. It lists all individuals who are registered to vote in Michigan, including their names, current addresses, address histories, and other identifying information. The QVF is especially important in Michigan's highly decentralized election system, where voter records are managed by over 1,700 local officials.

House Bill 5646 would require the Secretary of State to develop a process for comparing the QVF against the U.S. Social Security Administration's Death Master File (DMF). The DMF is a database of information about individuals with Social Security numbers whose deaths were reported to the Social Security Administration. It is the basis for the publicly available Social Security Death Index (SSDI) that is familiar to genealogists and other researchers.

Under the bill, the Secretary of State would use the DMF at least once a month to update the QVF and cancel the voter registration of any elector determined to be dead. The Secretary of State would also have to make this information available to city and township clerks to help them to cancel the registrations of dead voters.

House Bill 5646 would also require the Secretary of State to participate with other states in one or more recognized multistate programs or services, if available, to help in verifying the current address and registration status of voters. However, the Secretary of State could not participate in such a program or service if the program or service required the state to promote or adopt legislation as a condition of participation or if the Secretary of State were

to determine that data of that program or service were not being adequately secured or protected. Any information obtained through such a multistate program would be handled by the Secretary of State in the same way as change of address information, for example that which may be obtained from the U.S. Postal Service, is currently handled under section 509aa of the act.

The bill would take effect 90 days after its enactment.

MCL 168.509o

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

According to committee testimony, the provisions of this bill regarding a comparison of the Michigan Qualified Voter File against the Social Security Administration's Death Master File reflect and codify current practice.

With regard to the provisions of the bill that require the Secretary of State to join a multistate program or service to help in verifying the current address and registration status of voters, concerns were raised in committee regarding the safety and integrity of these programs and their data. The substitute adopted and reported by the committee requires that the state not join any program or service that the Secretary of State determines is not adequately securing or protecting its data.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Department of Secretary of State indicated support for the bill. (3-1-18)

The Clerk of the Charter Township of Brighton indicated support for the bill. (3-1-18)

The Michigan Election Reform Alliance indicated a neutral position with regard to the bill. (3-8-18)

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