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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 02/25/09

SPONSOR Morales LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Study All-Mail Ballots or Voting Centers SJM 58

ANALYST Ortiz

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY09	FY10		
NFI	NFI		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

County Clerks Affiliate (CCA)

Secretary of State (SOS)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Joint Memorial 58 assigns the appropriate legislative interim committee to study the feasibility and advisability of using either all-mail ballots or voting centers on election to contain rising costs, ensure full participation by voters, provide professional and efficient administration of elections and maintain full compliance and access for persons with disabilities.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The County Clerks Affiliate expressed support for this study explaining that the election process in the state has evolved, with more and more voters choosing the options of either absentee or early voting. This study would be incredibly valuable in gathering data for the Legislature that would indicate useful methods of more efficiently serving the voters, and possibly realizing substantial cost savings in the conduct of our elections.

All mail-in elections would address the fundamental right to vote on an equal basis. Mail balloting has several advantages over traditional polling. First, it is cost effective. Second, in states implanting it, it has resulted in increased participation among voters. Third, it is easier for election officials to conduct. Fourth, it allows for a more accurate picture of eligible voters, by keeping voting lists up-to-date. Fifth, it gives voters a longer opportunity to study the ballot and

find answers to their questions. For example, between 1995 and 1997 in Oregon, counties saved over \$1 million on three vote-by-mail special elections. If, during that same period, primary and general elections had been conducted by mail, Oregon counties could have saved an additional \$3 million.

The 2008 general election cost were \$5.2 million and 2.6 million ballots were ordered, of those 1.8 million were unused. Much of the excess relates to early voting sites, which allows a voter from any precinct in the county to vote at the early site. This means that each of the 74 early voting sites must have on-hand a ballot for a voter from any precinct within their county. Based on the methodology the Secretary of State used to obtain the number of ballots it would need for early voting, it calculated early voter participation at 30 percent and multiplied it by the number of early voting sites in the county. For example, a county with 100,000 registered voters would take 30 percent of that total to determine the number of early ballots needed, in this example 30,000. The county then multiplies 30,000 by its early sites, for example four early sites, to determine the number needed, in this example 120,000 ballots. These ballots are then distributed to each of the early voting sites. While some counties might distribute unused ballots to precincts for use on Election Day, many report that there is not enough time between the final day of early voting and the start of Election Day voting to inventory its stock and distribute for use on Election Day.

Prior to enactment of all paper ballot elections, costs to conduct an electronic election was \$1.2 million.

EO/svb