

Date of Hearing: May 19, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 1137 (Mullin) – As Amended April 21, 2021

Policy Committee: Elections Vote: 6 - 1

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to report to the Legislature, no later than July 1, 2022, on each lawfully established voter registration agency with established infrastructure and processes to allow a person who applies online to electronically submit a voter preference form and affidavit of voter registration and the feasibility of an agency establishing a process and infrastructure that securely and automatically registers an applicant to vote, unless the applicant declines to be registered.

This bill requires a voter registration agency to provide the SOS with all the information the SOS identifies as necessary to complete the report.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

The SOS estimates its Elections Division would require two new positions, an information technology specialist and a program analyst, to accomplish the analysis required for the report, including determining feasibility, at a cost of approximately \$288,000 for the first year and \$278,000 ongoing (General Fund).

The timeline in this bill allows for only six months to prepare what appears to be an extensive report. It is not feasible to prepare the report in such a short time frame, and updating the report periodically would add information to help boost civic engagement.

**COMMENTS:**

**Background and Purpose.** In 1993, the federal government enacted the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), commonly referred to as the "motor voter" law, to make it easier for Americans to register to vote and to remain registered to vote. In addition to other methods of voter registration states offer, the NVRA requires states to provide the opportunity to apply to register to vote for federal elections through various methods. The NVRA requires states to provide individuals with the opportunity to register to vote at the same time that they apply for or renew a driver's license at the DMV.

In 2012, SB 35 (Padilla), Chapter 505 required a voter registration agency that allows a person to apply online for services or assistance, or to submit a recertification, renewal, or change of address form relating to the service or assistance online, to implement a process and infrastructure to allow an applicant to electronically submit a voter preference form and an

affidavit of voter registration electronically on the SOS's internet website in accordance with online voter registration provisions of law.

According to the author:

AB 1137 was introduced with the goal of identifying potential next steps for expanding automatic voter registration efforts in California. The bill would require the Secretary of State's office to conduct a study on existing programs and infrastructure for voter registration efforts, including automatic voter registration, as well as identify other state agencies that have the capacity to incorporate an automatic voter registration program into their existing operations.

Programs for automatic voter registration hold immense promise for boosting voter registration rates and promoting civic participation. By reviewing the state's current voter registration efforts and identifying potential agencies to expand such efforts is the first step in augmenting automatic voter registration in California.

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