ASSEMBLY BUDGET COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR

[First Reprint]
SENATE, No. 647

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 18, 2018

The Assembly Budget Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 647 SCS (1R).

This substitute changes current law to enable a qualified voter to vote by mail-in ballot in all future elections. The substitute also provides that a voter who requested a mail-in ballot for all future elections, including future general elections, will continue to receive a mail-in ballot for such elections until the voter notifies the appropriate county clerk in writing that he or she no longer wishes to receive such a ballot, or is no longer eligible to vote.

The substitute also:

1) provides that a sample ballot for an election would not be mailed to any voter who has been sent a mail-in ballot for that election and whose voted ballot has been received by the county board of elections prior to the transmission of sample ballots to voters required by current law;

2) permits a county board to send an acknowledgement to a voter when his or her mail-in ballot has been received;

3) requires the Secretary of State to update the Statewide Voter Registration System to allow the postal tracking of mail-in ballots using Intelligent Mail barcodes, or a similar successor tracking system, upon the finding by the Secretary of State that such technology is viable;

4) reformats the text of the required public notice concerning the use of mail-in ballots that appears in newspapers before an election;

5) permits the clerk of each county to use an alternative mail-in ballot certification that permits the voter to certify the correctness of the identifying information contained on the label of the ballot instead of requiring the voter to provide the voter's name and address on the certification;

6) provides that every mail-in ballot that bears a postmark date of the day of an election and that is received within 48 hours after the time of the closing of the polls for that election is to be considered valid and canvassed;

7) adds two days to the deadline by which county and State canvassers boards must meet after an election, a recount may be requested, and a petition challenging any nomination or election to elective office may be filed; and

8) provides that the clerk of each county must add to the list of registered voters receiving a mail-in ballot for all future elections without further request each voter in the county who requested and received a mail-in ballot for the 2016 general election. Each voter so added would have the option to inform the clerk in writing that the voter does not wish to receive a mail-in ballot automatically for all future elections. The county clerks are to transmit to each such voter a notice that he or she will automatically receive a mail-in ballot for all future elections unless the voter informs the clerk in writing that he or she does not wish to receive such a ballot.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) believes that the fiscal impact of this substitute is indeterminate, and notes that if the substitute is enacted, it is likely that there will be an increase in the number of mail-in ballots sent to voters for future elections, but there will also be a reduction in the number of sample ballots produced, mailed, and returned as undeliverable, so that the cost or saving associated with the substitute will most likely depend on the number of ballots needed or not needed, and the cost for each ballot in each county. The OLS also notes that because the substitute requires the Secretary of State to update the Statewide Voter Registration System to allow the postal tracking of mail-in ballots using Intelligent Mail barcodes, or a similar successor tracking system, there may be an increase in expenditures by the Secretary of State to cover this cost.