

The Secretary of State’s Office reports that the State Board of Elections has already created a secure online portal. There would be a large cost increase for absentee ballots with a “convenience of the voter” excuse.

For the 2020 general election, 626,000 absentee ballots were cast. This compares to about 47,000 absentee ballots for the general election in 2016. The increase for 2020 was largely due to the temporary increase in permitted reasons (concern about contracting or spreading COVID-19) for obtaining an absentee ballot and the state’s new web portal. It may be likely that a “convenience of the voter” reason would significantly increase the number of absentee ballots as well. Generally, it is likely that fewer *total* ballots would be cast in non-presidential elections.

For the 2020 primary election, the State Board of Elections approved \$1 million to \$1.2 million to pay for return postage (although Kentucky does not typically provide prepaid postage for absentee ballots) and \$1 million to \$1.1 million for county clerks to hire staff for up to four weeks to help with processing of absentee ballots and the casting of in-person early ballots. If similar funding does not continue, there would be significant additional costs to counties. It is estimated that the cost of printing is up to \$0.25 per page for an absentee ballot, depending on the county’s printing contract. Each absentee ballot would have multiple pages and envelopes.

Saturday voting would increase costs for poll workers, staff, and possible location rental if Saturday voting is not already allowed in a county. There would also be costs for counties to update equipment, and there would be costs associated with additional staffing for in-person early voting in general.

Part III: Differences to Local Government Mandate Statement from Prior Versions

Part II, above, refers to the bill as introduced.

Data Source(s): LRC staff; <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/politics/elections/kentucky/2020/11/11/kentucky-elections-far-fewer-absentee-ballots-rejected-general/6161749002/>; <https://www.kentucky.com/news/politics-government/article242430706.html>; Secretary of State; Fayette County Clerk; Kentucky State Board of Elections; Kentucky County Clerks Association

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