Local Government Mandate Statement Kentucky Legislative Research Commission 2021 Regular Session

Part I: Measure Information

Bill Request #: 1120
Bill #: SB 124
Document ID #: 3047
Bill Subject/Title: AN ACT relating to elections.
Sponsor: Senator Stephen Meredith
Unit of Government: City X County X Urban-County Unified Local
X Charter County X Consolidated Local X Government
Office(s) Impacted: County Clerk Offices
Requirement: X Mandatory Optional
Effect on Powers & Duties: X Modifies Existing X Adds New Eliminates Existing

Part II: Bill Provisions and the Estimated Fiscal Impact Relating to Local Government

SB 124 would change the manner in which votes are counted by allowing voters to rank choices for a regular or special election if there are more than two candidates in a race for member of the General Assembly, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Auditor, Commissioner of Agriculture, and Treasurer. It does not apply to a primary.

The ballot must allow a voter to rank candidates in order of preference, allow a voter to include one write-in candidate, and be formatted in a simple and easy-to-read format. The voter is not required to rank candidates.

Tallying of votes would occur in rounds. If there are two or fewer candidates after a round, then the candidate with the most votes would be declared the winner. If there are more than two candidates, the last-place candidate would be considered defeated, and a new round would begin. Ties would be decided by lot.

SB 124 would have a minimal to moderate negative fiscal impact on county clerk's offices. There would be increased costs associated with rank choice voting:

- purchasing new voting machines that have electronic capability to allow voters to rank choices, if current voting machines do not already have that capability;
- programming existing voting machines to allow voters to rank choices;
- training staff on the new procedures;
- designing and printing a new ballot format; and
- counting ballots over several rounds.

Many, but not all, existing voting machines might be capable of being programmed to accommodate ranked choice voting. Programming existing machines would increase the cost of voting in all county precincts by as much as ten percent.

New voting machines that could accommodate ranked choice voting would need to be purchased in some counties, which could be a significant cost. Voting machines typically cost \$3,500 to \$5,000 each. An optical scanner for paper ballots can cost as much as \$5,000 per location.

Designing and printing a new ballot format would increase costs, but these costs may be minimized for future elections if the same design is used. Training staff on new procedures and counting ballots over several rounds would also increase costs.

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

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

Data Source(s): LRC staff; https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-

analysis/blogs/stateline/2016/03/02/aging-voting-machines-cost-local-

state-governments; WLEX; Fayette County Clerk;

Kentucky State Board of Elections: Kentucky County Clerks' Association

Preparer: Robert Jenkins **Reviewer:** KHC **Date:** 3/11/21