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SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 437 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Glenn D. Steil
Committee: Government Operations

Date Completed: 5-13-97

RATIONALE

As amended by Public Act 583 of 1996, the Election Law requires a board of election commissioners to provide at least one voting station for every 200 registered voters in each precinct. Prior to the passage of Public Act 583, one voting station for every 400 voters in each precinct was required. In many precincts throughout the State, requiring a voting station for every 200 registered voters substantially increases the number of stations that a local unit of government must make available. While increasing the number of voting stations will help in the future to address the problem of long lines at the polls (widely reported after the 1996 presidential election), it has been pointed out that the new requirement will force those local units that have insufficient voting stations to purchase new stations. Further, it has been pointed out that under the Election Law the Secretary of State must have established the Statewide qualified voter file for the conduct of all elections held after 1997. Many people believe that the Statewide qualified voter file will allow local election clerks to purge their voter registration lists of the names of persons who may be registered in more than one precinct or, for whatever reason (death, change of residence, etc.), are not eligible to remain registered to vote. Reportedly, many local election clerks have requested that the requirement to provide more voting stations be delayed until after 1997, to delay the expense of purchasing new voting stations and to obtain a more accurate count of the actual number of registered voters in the precincts, and thus an accurate measure of the number of voting stations needed.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to provide that, for an election held in 1997, the board of election commissioners of a county, city, village,

township, or school district would have to provide at least one voting station for every 400 registered voters in each precinct; for elections in 1998 and thereafter, one voting station would have to be provided for every 200 registered voters in each precinct.

MCL 168.796a

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

Public Act 583 of 1996, effective March 31, 1997, amended the Election Law to require that at least one voting station be provided for every 200 registered voters in each precinct; previously, at least one voting station had to be provided for every 400 voters. While the change obviously will increase the number of voting machines per precinct, and thus decrease lines at the polls, it may cause unnecessary problems and expenses for local units of government. Though some local units already have sufficient voting stations to meet the new requirement, many do not and will have to purchase new voting stations. This expense, or at least part of it, may be unnecessary. Local election clerks and State election officials have said that once the Statewide qualified voter file is available local officials will be able to eliminate from their registered voter files the names of many persons who no longer live in the precinct in which they are registered.

The Statewide qualified voter file must be established for elections held after 1997; thus, for elections in 1998 and thereafter local election clerks will be able to determine more accurately how many registered voters there are in their

precincts. By delaying until 1998 the requirement to increase the number of voting stations per precinct, the bill would allow those clerks to determine more accurately how many voting stations they actually need.

Response: Perhaps it would make sense to delay the increase in voting stations until the year 2000, since it is presidential elections that tend to create long lines at the polls.

Legislative Analyst: G. Towne

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would temporarily delay costs to local units that have not complied with Public Act 583 of 1996.

Fiscal Analyst: B. Bowerman

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.