

Legislative Analysis



EARLY IN-PERSON ABSENTEE VOTING WITHOUT PROVIDING A REASON

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House Bill 4508

Sponsor: Rep. Chris Ward

Committee: Ethics and Elections

Complete to 10-22-07

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4508 AS INTRODUCED 3-21-07

House Bill 4508 would amend the Michigan Election Law to allow for early in-person absentee voting without providing a reason during the seven days preceding a primary or election.

Under the bill, a qualified or registered elector who appeared at the city, township, or village clerk's office at any time during the seven days preceding a primary or election (excepting Sunday or a legal holiday), but not later than 4 p.m. on the day before the election, could complete an absent voter ballot application, receive a ballot, and vote the ballot in the clerk's office without having to provide a reason. After receiving and voting the ballot, the absent voter would be required to personally submit the ballot to the clerk (or a designated assistant clerk) in a signed and dated return envelope.

The absent voter would have to establish identification by presenting a Michigan drivers license, state identification card, other government-issued photo identification card, or a photo identification card issued by a state university or community college.

If a city, township, or village clerk's office did not maintain regular business hours during the seven days preceding a primary or election, a registered voter could apply and vote at the county clerk's office. The bill specifies that each city, township, or village clerk who allowed absent voters to vote at the county clerk's office could make one voting machine available that allowed an absent voter to check his or her ballot for errors without tabulating the ballot.

A person who made a false statement in the ballot application would be guilty of a misdemeanor. A person who forged a signature would be guilty of a felony.

MCL 168.758 and 168.764b

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would have a minimal impact on the Department of State. Any cost increases resulting from the bill could be absorbed within the department's existing budget. The bill would increase costs to local units by an indeterminate amount. For the upcoming

presidential primary election, under Section 624g of the Michigan Election Law, the Department of State would have to reimburse local units for their costs.

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