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BILL



ANALYSIS

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House Bill 4992 (as passed by the House)  
Sponsor: Representative Eileen Kowall  
House Committee: Redistricting and Elections  
Senate Committee: Local Government and Elections

Date Completed: 5-2-12

### **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to do the following:**

- **Require voting instructions to be provided in each polling booth or voting compartment used at an election, rather than printed on each ballot.**
- **Eliminate provisions prescribing the form of a ballot and listing of candidates' names, and instead require ballots to be prepared as prescribed by the Secretary of State (SOS) based upon the voting equipment used in each county.**
- **Require instructions concerning the method of voting to be included with each absent voter ballot furnished to an absent voter.**

#### Primary Elections

The Law requires ballots for a primary election to contain instructions as to the method of voting. The bill would delete this requirement. Instead, each polling booth or voting compartment used at a primary election would have to contain instructions as to the procedures for marking a ballot as prescribed by the SOS.

The Law requires the official primary election ballots to be prepared according to a particular form, which includes voter instructions. The bill would delete these requirements, as well as provisions prescribing the specific format for the listing of candidates' names. Instead, the official primary ballots would have to be prepared in a form prescribed by the SOS based upon the voting equipment being used in each county.

#### Holding of Elections

Candidate Names. The Law requires the arrangement of candidate names on a ballot to conform to a particular plan and contain specific instructions, including instructions for voting a straight party ticket, voting for a write-in candidate, etc. The bill would delete these requirements. Instead, the arrangement of the ballot containing the names of candidates would have to be prescribed by the SOS based upon the voting equipment being used in each county. Each polling booth or voting compartment used at an election would have to contain the instructions as to the procedures for marking a ballot as prescribed by the SOS.

Absent Voters. In addition to the instructions provided to an absent voter under Section 764a, instructions for an absent voter concerning the method of voting would have to be included with each absent voter ballot furnished to an absent voter.

Section 764a requires specific instructions to be included with each ballot or set of ballots furnished to an absent voter, including the following text: "Step 1. On the absent voter ballot enclosed you will find voting instructions." Under the bill, the following text would have to be included: "Step 1. Enclosed you will find voting instructions as to the method of voting."

MCL 168.560 et al.

Legislative Analyst: Julie Cassidy

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State government.

Local election clerks' offices could realize savings due to the lower printing costs that would result from the provisions of this bill. Additional savings also could be realized due to efficiencies in ballot processing that could result. The exact amount of savings is indeterminate.

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco

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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.