

## INCREASE ALLOWABLE PRECINCT SIZE AND REQUIRE PERMANENT ABSENT VOTER LIST

Phone: (517) 373-8080  
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

**House Bill 5032 as introduced**  
**Sponsor: Rep. Ann M. Bollin**  
**Committee: Elections and Ethics**  
**Complete to 10-15-19**

Analysis available at  
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

### SUMMARY:

House Bill 5032 would amend the Michigan Election Code to increase the maximum number of electors allowed in a precinct from 2,999 to 5,000, beginning in 2022 (two years after the next decennial census).

The bill would also increase that number for certain elections in the interim. Currently, voting precincts may be consolidated as long as the number of electors does not exceed 5,000 for elections that are not a November general election, the primary preceding that general election, or other statewide or federal elections. The bill would allow precincts to be consolidated for any election except a November general election. It would also allow precincts that are currently divided to have the division abolished as long as it appears, from an examination of registration records, that the consolidated district would not exceed 5,000 active registered electors.

Additionally, the bill would require city and township clerks to maintain a permanent absent voter list. Currently, maintenance and use of a permanent absent voter list is optional for jurisdictions, and if a jurisdiction chooses not to maintain a list, a voter must request an application for an absentee ballot before each election.<sup>1</sup>

Under the bill, upon request in person or by phone, fax, email, or mail, a qualified and registered elector could request to be added to his or her city's or township's permanent absent voter list. Then, the elector's information would be added to the Michigan Qualified Voter File (QVF), and the applicable county, city, or township clerk would send the voter an absentee ballot application for each election. If the elector moved, the request would continue automatically and the elector would be listed on the permanent absent voter list of his or her new city or township. An elector could request to be removed from the list using any of the methods listed above.

MCL 168.658, 168.659, and 168.661

### BACKGROUND:

The QVF was mandated by 1994 PA 441 and implemented January 1, 1998. It lists all individuals who are registered to vote in Michigan, including their names, current

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/VI\\_Michigans\\_Absentee\\_Voting\\_Process\\_265992\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/VI_Michigans_Absentee_Voting_Process_265992_7.pdf)

addresses, address histories, and other identifying information. The QVF is especially important in Michigan's highly decentralized election system, where voter records are managed by over 1,700 local officials.

Proposal 3 of 2018, approved by the voters with 67% of the vote, added eight voter rights to the Michigan Constitution, including "no-reason absentee voting." Previously, a voter had to meet one of six criteria in order to qualify for an absentee ballot. Now, Michigan voters can obtain an absentee ballot during the 40 days before an election. House Bill 5032 would further ease the process of receiving an absentee ballot by allowing a person to be added to a permanent absent voter list and be mailed an application automatically before each election.

Links to information for existing permanent absent voter lists are below:

Ann Arbor: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/city-clerk/Elections/Documents/Permanent%20Absent%20Voter%20List%20FAQpdf.pdf>

Delta Township: <http://www.deltami.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Permanent-Absent-Voter-List-Request.pdf>

East Lansing: <https://www.cityofeastlansing.com/FormCenter/City-Clerk-4/Permanent-Absentee-Voter-Form-78>

Royal Oak: <https://royaloakmi.seamlessdocs.com/f/permanentabsenteelist>

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

House Bill 5032 would have no direct fiscal impact on the Department of State, but would provide for potential cost savings to certain cities, wards, townships, or villages that are eligible to consolidate precincts without having over 5,000 registered electors. These local units of government could realize savings by requiring fewer numbers of voting equipment and resources, such as absentee voter counting board tabulators, to meet the election needs in that precinct. There is an anticipated need for additional tabulators following the approval of no-reason absentee voting in the November 2018 statewide election. Absentee voter counting board tabulators cost approximately \$5,000 each. Data on the number of eligible precincts and the number of fewer tabulators required were not available at the time of this analysis for an estimate of cost savings to local units of government.

The supplemental appropriations budget act, 2019 PA 28, appropriated \$1.0 million GF/GP to support the costs toward local units of government of absentee voter counting board tabulators. However, the Department of State has reported that these state funds are not sufficient to cover all local costs.

Legislative Analyst: Jenny McInerney

Fiscal Analyst: Michael Crossen

---

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.