



Fiscal Note

Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

HB 26-1080: COUNTY MAIL BALLOT SIGNATURE VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Prime Sponsors:

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Fiscal note status: This fiscal note reflects the introduced bill.

Summary Information

Overview. The bill requires county clerks to use a team of bipartisan election judges during the initial signature verification review for mail ballots.

Types of impacts. The bill is projected to affect the following areas on an ongoing basis starting in FY 2026-27:

- State Expenditures
- Minimal State Workload
- State Revenue
- Local Government

Appropriations. No appropriation is required.

Table 1
State Fiscal Impacts

Type of Impact	Budget Year FY 2026-27	Out Year FY 2027-28
State Revenue	\$0	\$0
State Expenditures	\$0	\$0
Transferred Funds	\$0	\$0
Change in TABOR Refunds	\$0	\$0
Change in State FTE	0.0 FTE	0.0 FTE

Summary of Legislation

Under current law, mail ballot signature verification happens in two tiers. First, a single election judge reviews a ballot's signature against other signatures on a voter's file. In some counties, for this first review, a signature verification system is used and then a single election judge reviews any discrepancies flagged by the system. If the election judge believes there is a signature discrepancy, the ballot is reviewed a second time. During this second-level review, two election judges review the ballot signature for any discrepancies.

The bill changes this format by requiring that two bipartisan election judges review each signature in the county's initial signature review. It then requires one other judge of any political party affiliation to review those ballots pushed into a tier two review. The Department of State must establish rules for using a team of bipartisan election judges.

State Expenditures

The Department of State will have additional workload to establish rules on using a team of bipartisan election judges, which can be accomplished within existing resources. The department will also have increased costs to reimburse counties for election-related spending described in the local government section. The department reimburses counties 45 percent of election related expenses. The exact reimbursement will depend on county implementation of the requirement and has not been estimated.

Local Government

Costs will, on net, increase for counties to conduct elections. County Clerks will need to hire, train, and schedule two bipartisan election judges for all mail ballots they receive. The workload impact of having two bipartisan judges will be highest in counties that do not use an electronic signature verification system. The number of additional judges required will be highest during peak mail ballot times, and will vary by county based on the number of ballots received. This workload will require increased election judge staffing hours and overtime pay. These costs will be partially offset by only needing one election judge, rather than two, for the second-level review; however, only a small percentage of signatures require a second-level review, so costs on net will increase for counties. For informational purposes, counties had costs of about \$7.1 million for all election judge activities in the 2024 General Election, of which the state reimbursed about \$3.2 million dollars. The hourly wage for an election judge averages about \$16.00 per hour.

Effective Date

The bill takes effect 90 days following adjournment of the General Assembly sine die, assuming no referendum petition is filed.

State and Local Government Contacts

County Clerks

Secretary of State

The revenue and expenditure impacts in this fiscal note represent changes from current law under the bill for each fiscal year. For additional information about fiscal notes, please visit the [General Assembly website](#).