



Fiscal Note

Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado’s Legislature

SB 25-001: COLORADO VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Prime Sponsors:

Sen. Gonzales J.
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Fiscal note status: The fiscal note reflects the introduced bill.

Summary Information

Overview. The bill establishes the Colorado Voting Rights Act and places voting access related requirements on the Department of State, local entities, and state-funded organizations.

Types of impacts. The bill is projected to affect the following areas on an ongoing basis:

- State Expenditures
- State Revenue
- TABOR Refunds
- Local Government

Appropriations. For FY 2025-26, the bill requires an appropriation of \$3,211,105 to the Department of State.

**Table 1
State Fiscal Impacts**

Type of Impact	Budget Year FY 2025-26	Out Year FY 2026-27
State Revenue (Cash Funds)	\$3,211,105	\$3,035,691
State Expenditures (Cash Funds)	\$3,211,105	\$3,035,691
Transferred Funds	\$0	\$0
Change in TABOR Refunds	\$3,211,105	\$3,035,691
Change in State FTE	16.6 FTE	22.0 FTE

Summary of Legislation

The bill codifies the right of equal access to the political process for racial, color, and language minority groups, as established in the Federal Voting Rights Act. Cities and counties are responsible for providing equal access and the bill specifies certain ways of conducting elections that are a violation of voting rights. The bill establishes a civil action process for remedying violations.

The bill creates the Statewide Election Database and Information Office (election information office) in the Department of State (DOS) to evaluate current law and practice related to election administration, implement best practices in election administration, and investigate potential infringement of the right to vote in Colorado. The bill specifies what type of data must be collected and evaluated and that the data must be made publically available. The director of the new election information office may make referrals to the Attorney General concerning potential violations.

Additionally, the bill:

- increases the number of in-person voting days on Indian reservations from four to 15 days upon request of the tribal council;
- requires entities that provide state-funded services to people with disabilities to display relevant voting information;
- specifies voting registration requirements for electors on Indian reservations without an addresses recognized by the post office; and
- applies ballot translation requirements to municipal elections.

State Revenue

The bill increases fee revenue in DOS by up to \$3.2 million in FY 2023-24 and up to \$3.0 million in future years to the Department of State Cash Fund. It may also increase fine revenue. These impacts are described below.

Fee Impact on Businesses

Colorado law requires legislative service agency review of measures which create or increase any fee collected by a state agency. Under current law, DOS is authorized to adjust fees so that the revenue generated approximates its direct and indirect costs. The DOS is primarily funded through business filing fees. To cover the costs described in the State Expenditures section below, fees will need to be raised to cover the costs. The fees affected and the actual amount of fee charges will be set administratively by the DOS based on cash fund balance, total program costs, and the estimated number of business activities subject to fees. This revenue is subject to TABOR.

State Expenditures

The bill increases state expenditures in the Department of State by \$3.2 million in FY 2025-26, and \$3.0 million in future years. These costs, paid from the Department of State Cash Fund, are summarized in Table 2 and discussed below. The bill also minimally affects workload in the Department of Law (DOL) and in state departments that provide or contract with entities that provide state-funded services to people with disabilities.

Table 2
State Expenditures
Department of State

Cost Component	Budget Year FY 2025-26	Out Year FY 2026-27
Personal Services	\$1,402,009	\$1,823,657
Operating Expenses	\$21,248	\$28,160
Capital Outlay Costs	\$146,740	\$0
All Employee Insurance	\$212,619	\$281,626
Supplemental PERA	\$123,984	\$161,272
Leased Space	\$113,046	\$149,820
Computer Programing	\$576,853	\$0
Computer Software	\$602,456	\$579,006
County Reimbursement	\$12,150	\$12,150
Total Costs	\$3,211,105	\$3,035,691
Total FTE	16.6 FTE	22.0 FTE

Staff

DOS requires 22 FTE to create and operate the new election information office. Staff will consist of office directors, election experts, information technology (IT) experts, and administrative staff. Staffing costs in FY 2025-26 are prorated to either a September or November 2025 start date, depending on the position.

Office Directors

DOS will require 2.0 FTE for a director and a deputy director of the new election information office. They will oversee the creation of the office and manage and coordinate the efforts of the other staff.

Election Experts

13 FTE are required for election subject matter expertise. This staffing was calculated as 14 percent of the current staff in the Election's Division of DOS to expand its responsibilities from election operation, security, and reporting to also include voting rights act monitoring and enforcement, which will require a substantial focus on state and local redistricting, among other things.

IT Experts

5 FTE are required for IT expertise. This staff will oversee the development of and then maintain the new public-facing, voting right monitoring systems. This staffing level was informed by the current staff required to maintain the Statewide Voter Registration System (SCORE), which has an IT team of 7 FTE plus county support staff. The FTE reflect the ongoing maintenance and support of the system; computer programming and software costs are discussed separately below.

Administrative Support

2 FTE are required for administrative support staff. Given the size of the new office the DOS administration office will require an additional human resource specialist and accountant.

Additional Staffing Costs

Pursuant to a Joint Budget Committee policy, certain costs are typically addressed through the annual budget process and centrally appropriated in the Long Bill or supplemental appropriations bills. Since the bill requires over 20 FTE, these costs are addressed through a direct appropriation in the bill instead. These costs include employee insurance, supplemental employee retirement payments, and leased space as shown in Table 2.

Computer Programing and Software Costs

DOS will contract with a computer programmer to set up the new public-facing, voting right monitoring systems that will use statistical and geographic information software. The fiscal note estimates that the contract will cost about \$577,000, based on a total of 2,800 hours at a rate of \$208 per hour. The contract cost is one-time but the system will require several software licenses with ongoing-renewal fees. The largest ongoing cost is for user authentication and management software needed to secure access to the website for counties and municipalities.

Country Reimbursement

DOS reimburses counties for 45 percent of their election costs. The bill requires counties to operate in-person voting centers on two tribal lands for an additional nine days during November elections at an estimated cost of \$1,500 per location per day. This will increase state reimbursement to counties by about \$12,000 per year.

Other Department of State Impacts

Workload in DOS will increase to refer information to Attorney General concerning potential violations. DOS may require legal services provided by the Department of Law at a rate of \$134 per hour. The fiscal note assumes that counties and municipalities will comply with the law and any impact will be minimal.

Workload in DOS will minimally increase to monitor municipalities for compliance with the ballot translation requirements. DOS does not reimburse municipalities for any portion of the cost of the effected elections.

Other Agency Impacts

Workload will increase in the Department of Law to the extent any information concerning potential violations is referred to the Attorney General or any civil actions are filed. The Attorney General will prioritize investigations as necessary within available appropriations.

Workload will minimally increase for state departments that provide or contract with entities that provide state-funded services to people with disabilities to comply with the public posting requirements.

TABOR Refunds

The bill is expected to increase the amount of state revenue required to be refunded to taxpayers by the amounts shown in the State Revenue section above. This estimate assumes the December 2024 LCS revenue forecast. A forecast of state revenue subject to TABOR is not available beyond FY 2026-27. Because TABOR refunds are paid from the General Fund, increased cash fund revenue will reduce the amount of General Fund available to spend or save.

Local Government

County election costs will increase by \$27,000 annually to operate in-person voting centers on two tribal lands for an additional nine days during November elections at an estimated cost of \$1,500 per location per day. DOS will reimburse counties for 45 percent of these costs as reflected in the State Expenditure section above.

Municipal election costs will increase to comply with the ballot translation requirements. These costs will be incurred for stand-alone elections conducted directly by a municipal clerk. These requirements are already in-place for coordinated elections conducted by county clerks, which make up the majority of municipal elections. DOS does not reimburse municipalities for any portion of the costs of non-coordinated elections.

Workload will increase for counties and municipalities to provide information to the election information office. DOS is responsible for providing technological security for the transfer of data.

Effective Date

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

State Appropriations

For FY 2025-26, the bill requires an appropriation of \$3,211,105 from the Department of State Cash Fund to the Department of State, and 16.6 FTE.

State and Local Government Contacts

Behavioral Health Administration	Judicial
Counties	Law
County Clerks	Municipalities
Health Care Policy and Financing	Personnel
Human Services	Public Health and Environment
Information Technology	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](#).