

Senate Fiscal Agency
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

Telephone: (517) 373-5383
Fax: (517) 373-1986
TDD: (517) 373-0543

House Bill 4414 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Representative Patricia Birkholz
House Committee: Redistricting and Elections
Senate Committee: Education

Date Completed: 6-26-02

RATIONALE

Under the Michigan Election Law, at least three election inspectors are appointed by each precinct's board of election commissioners to conduct that precinct's elections. In order to serve, each inspector must be a registered voter of the county in which he or she is appointed. The inspectors must undergo training or pass a test to ensure that they are prepared for their responsibilities, which include setting up voting equipment, opening the polls, guiding voters through the voting process, handling spoiled ballots, tallying write-in votes (after determining their validity), closing the polls, and securing the ballots. (For more on election inspectors, please see **BACKGROUND** below.)

Under the Revised School Code, a school board appoints "school electors" from each precinct to serve as election inspectors during school elections. Reportedly, recruiting and training enough eligible school electors can be problematic, particularly when trained election inspectors are not eligible to serve as school electors because they live outside the school district in which the election is held. It has been suggested that qualified election inspectors be allowed to serve as inspectors in school district elections, provided that they live in the same county the school district serves.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to permit registered and qualified electors of the county, or any county if more than one, in which a school district was located to serve as election inspectors in that district's school elections.

Currently, the Code requires a school board to appoint three or more school electors from each voting precinct to serve as the board of election inspectors in that precinct, except when the school election is conducted by city or township officials. The bill would refer to "qualified and registered electors", rather than "school electors", and would require a member of the board of election inspectors to be a qualified and registered elector of the county in which the school district was located or, if the school district were located in more than one county, a qualified and registered elector of any county in which the school district was located.

Under the Code, if a school district located wholly or partly in a city or township holds an election at the same time that the city or township holds an election, the election commissioners, election inspectors, and other election officials conducting the city or township election may act in their respective capacities for the school election when agreed upon by the school board and the governing body of the city or township for that portion of the school district located in the city or township. The bill would remove election inspectors from this provision. The bill specifies that, if agreed upon by the school board and the governing body of the city or township, an election inspector conducting a city or township election at the same time as a school election could serve as an election inspector for the school election.

MCL 380.959 et al.

BACKGROUND

According to the Secretary of State's webpage, the first three election inspectors

appointed by a board of election commissions must be at least 18 years old; any additional precinct inspectors may be 16 or 17. A commission is required to appoint at least one inspector for each major political party and to balance politically each precinct board as nearly as possible. (Current "major political parties" are the Republican Party and the Democratic Party.) Each municipality can compensate its inspectors; pay ranges from \$8 to \$12 an hour. On election day, shifts may last up to 18 hours.

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

According to an article in *The Detroit News* (9-23-00), there is a nationwide shortage of election workers. Two root causes account for this shortage: First, the retirees who have made up the bulk of election inspectors are aging; second, the increase in the number of women in the workplace means there are fewer people available during the day to replace the retirees. The bill would create a larger pool of trained and experienced election inspectors to serve at school elections. A shortage of election workers can result in longer lines at the polls, which may discourage some potential voters. In 1996, the Michigan Election Law was amended to allow people as young as 16 to serve as inspectors, as well as permit a person to work as an inspector anywhere in his or her home county. The bill would continue this easing of inspector qualifications, which is a logical solution to the shortage of workers.

Legislative Analyst: Claire Layman

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Jessica Runnels

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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.