
**State Government, Elections &
Information Technology Committee**

HB 2173

Brief Description: Addressing ballot drop box accessibility.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins and Koster.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires each county to have at least one ballot drop box per 30,000 registered voters in the county.
- Requires the state to pay for the costs of obtaining and operating ballot drop boxes in all elections.

Hearing Date: 4/11/17

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

Registered voters receive election ballots by mail for each election and may return voted ballots to the county auditor by mail or by depositing the ballot in a designate ballot drop box. Many counties have drop boxes at the county voting center as well as other permanent and temporary locations. The Secretary is authorized to adopt rules specifying requirements for ballot deposit sites.

Voting centers and drop boxes are open until 8 p.m. on election day. At least two people are required to remove ballots from a drop box location and ballots must be returned to the county counting center in a secured container.

Summary of Bill:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

By 2027 each county must have at least one ballot drop box per 30,000 registered voters in the county. Preference must be given for placing at least one ballot drop box in each city, town, and census-designated place in the county with a post office. The county auditor is authorized to place ballot drop boxes in any public school, public library, or fire station.

The state is responsible for the cost of obtaining, siting, maintaining, and operating ballot drop boxes for all elections. Payments for ballot drop box costs must be from appropriations specifically provided by law for that purpose. The Secretary of State must include a budget request for sufficient funds to pay for such ballot box expenses.

The county auditor must certify costs and file expense claims with the Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS). County auditors must submit a request to the OSOS by December 1 for any new ballot drop boxes the county is requesting for the following year. The Secretary of State may reimburse the county for the requested new ballot drop boxes, or may contract with a third party to fulfill all or some of the requests.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.