



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

May 29, 2014

S. 1728

Safeguarding Elections through Reforms and Improvements Act

As reported by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration on April 10, 2014

S. 1728 would amend the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), which requires that states and territories allow uniformed and overseas voters to vote absentee in federal elections. In particular, the bill would require each state to submit to the Attorney General and the Secretary of Defense a pre-election report on the number of absentee ballot applications received from voters covered by UOCAVA and the number of such ballots transmitted. The bill also would require states to send absentee ballots by express mail if they fail to meet the deadline established by the bill for mailing ballots in response to valid and timely applications.

The bill also would direct the Department of Defense (DoD) to contact military personnel annually to offer assistance in registering to vote, updating voting registration, and requesting absentee ballots. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), which acts on behalf of the Secretary of Defense, assists members of the armed forces in the voting process and currently offers assistance through its website. Based on information from DoD, CBO expects that agency would provide the required annual assistance through brief online training modules that would direct members to the FVAP website if they wish to receive further assistance. CBO estimates that developing the training module, completing necessary modifications to the FVAP website, and increased website hosting expenses would cost approximately \$1 million in 2015 and less than \$500,000 annually from 2016 to 2019, assuming availability of appropriated funds.

Enacting S. 1728 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

CBO has not reviewed S. 1728 for intergovernmental or private-sector mandates. Section 4 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act excludes from the application of that act any legislative provisions that would enforce the constitutional rights of individuals. CBO has determined that the legislation falls within that exclusion because it would protect the voting rights of certain individuals.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Jason Wheelock. The estimate was approved by Theresa Gullo, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.