LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE

[Third Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4083

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

DATED: JANUARY 15, 2026

SUMMARY

Synopsis: Establishes "John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act of New Jersey"; appropriates $5 million.

Type of Impact: Annual expenditure increases to the State and local government entities.

Agencies Affected: Department of the Treasury; Department of State; the Judiciary; the Department of Law and Public Safety; local governments.

Office of Legislative Services Estimate

Fiscal Impact	Year 1	Year 2 & Thereafter
State Expenditure Increase	At least $5 million	Indeterminate
Local Government Expenditure Increase	Indeterminate	Indeterminate

- The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) finds that the bill will result in an initial State expenditure increase of up to $2.5 million for the implementation of the bill's provisions, including enforcing voting rights in the State and the administration of the preclearance process by the Office of the Attorney General. The bill also provides that the Office of the Attorney General can no longer act as the legal representative for political subdivisions with regard to any elections-related issue and appropriates an additional $2.5 million for reimbursement of political subdivisions for the cost of private counsel. Both appropriations lead to an initial total State expenditure increase of up to $5 million.

- State expenditures will also increase by an indeterminate amount due to requiring the Department of State to implement a public education campaign and establish a publicly accessible elections database and requiring the Attorney General to conduct a study every two years to determine whether additional political subdivisions should be required to provide language access coverage to limited English proficient individuals.

- Additional annual State costs beyond these implementation costs are also likely to accrue to the Judiciary from an increased caseload to the extent the bill results in additional litigation from alleged violations of voting rights.

- The OLS estimates that local governments will incur periodic costs to provide language assistance to voters if it is not already provided. Some local governments will also incur indeterminate periodic costs if found to have violated the bill's provisions and are ordered by the court to enact remedies to address the violation and to reimburse plaintiffs for their work on the matter. Local governments previously found to have violated the voting rights of a protected class will incur additional administrative costs under the preclearance process.

BILL DESCRIPTION

This bill provides certain protections regarding the right to vote in New Jersey. It specifically safeguards voting rights for members of certain protected classes by establishing a series of tests to determine when those rights have been infringed and by creating a standardized mechanism for redressing violations.

The bill assigns the Department of Law and Public Safety the responsibility to oversee the implementation and enforcement of the bill's provisions and all State election laws. The bill appropriates $2.5 million to the Office of the Attorney General to do so.

The bill also provides that the Attorney General can no longer act as the legal representative for political subdivisions with regard to any elections-related issue and appropriates an additional $2.5 million for reimbursement of political subdivisions for the cost of private counsel.

Under the bill, aggrieved parties may notify local government entities of perceived violations of the bill and demand reimbursement for the cost of substantiating such claims up to $50,000, if the local government implements a remedy in response to the notification. If the local government does not implement a remedy and the dispute proceeds to trial, there is no limit on the amount a plaintiff may recover from the local government.

The bill also requires local governments to provide physical voting materials, which may also be made available online, in languages other than English when the local electorate meets certain criteria regarding limited English language proficiency. The bill requires the State to adhere to this requirement if it produces or disseminates such materials on behalf of a local government.

Additionally, the bill requires the Office of the Attorney General to conduct a study every two years to determine whether additional political subdivisions should be subject to requirements to provide language access to limited English proficient individuals. The bill also requires the Division of Elections to create and maintain a publicly accessible elections database.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

None received.

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

The OLS finds that the bill will result in an initial State expenditure increase of up to $2.5 million for the implementation of the bill's provisions, including enforcing voting rights in the State and the administration of the preclearance process by the Office of the Attorney General. The bill also provides that the Office of the Attorney General can no longer act as the legal representative for political subdivisions with regard to any elections-related issue and appropriates

an additional $2.5 million for reimbursement of political subdivisions for the cost of private counsel. Both appropriations lead to an initial total State expenditure increase of $5 million.

State expenditures will also increase by an indeterminate amount due to requiring the Department of State to implement a public education campaign and establish a publicly accessible elections database and requiring the Attorney General to conduct a study every two years to determine whether additional political subdivisions should be required to provide language access to limited English proficient individuals.

Additional annual State costs beyond these implementation costs are also likely to accrue to the Judiciary from an increased caseload, to the extent the bill results in additional litigation from alleged violations of voting rights.

Furthermore, the OLS finds that local governments will experience an indeterminate increase in expenditures, but the extent to which local government expenditures will increase cannot be reliably estimated. Under the bill, local governments will incur periodic costs to provide language assistance to voters if it is not already provided. Some local governments will also incur indeterminate periodic costs if found to have violated the bill's provisions and are ordered by the court to enact remedies to address the violation and to reimburse plaintiffs for their work on the matter. Local governments previously found to have violated the voting rights of a protected class will incur additional administrative costs under the preclearance process.

Local governments may also experience an indeterminate increase in expenditures due to the bill requiring political subdivisions to attain private counsel for election matters. The entities are eligible to receive reimbursement, but the bill provides a cap of $250 per hour. If the private counsel elected by the political subdivision charges rates greater than $250 per hour, or the fund is depleted, it is unclear whether the political subdivision is required to pay the difference.

Section:	*State Government*
Analyst:	*Camryn Mathews* *Associate Fiscal Analyst*
Approved:	*Thomas Koenig* *Legislative Budget and Finance Officer*

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67 (C.52:13B-6 et seq.).