

FISCAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Measure: SB 944 - 1

80th Oregon Legislative Assembly – 2019 Regular Session
Legislative Fiscal Office

*Only Impacts on Original or Engrossed
Versions are Considered Official*

Prepared by: Haylee Morse-Miller
Reviewed by: Ken Rocco
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Measure Description:

Permits county clerk to decide whether to conduct hand count of ballots or risk-limiting audit following each primary, general or special election.

Government Unit(s) Affected:

Counties, Secretary of State (SOS)

Summary of Fiscal Impact:

Costs related to the measure are indeterminate at this time - See explanatory analysis.

Analysis:

SB 944 - 1 requires county clerks to audit each primary, general and special election using either a hand count or a risk-limiting audit. The hand count method for general elections is already in statute. The risk-limiting audit is a newly-introduced procedure that can be used to detect incorrect election outcomes. Under this measure, county clerks may opt to use either of these methods to verify election outcomes.

The Secretary of State (SOS) will need to hire a statistician to conduct rulemaking for risk-limiting audits and to implement audits for each election. It is unclear how much it will cost to contract with a qualified statistician for the duration of the 2019-21 biennium.

Additionally, while audits are currently done for all general elections, this measure also requires audits of primary and special elections. It is unknown how many elections will be conducted in the upcoming biennium, how many candidates and measures will be included in each election, and how often county clerks will choose to implement a risk-limiting audit versus a hand count of ballots.

This measure is in effect for all primary, general and special elections held on or after September 1, 2020. Given the degree of uncertainty around anticipated costs, the Legislative Fiscal Office assumes that the Secretary will seek General Fund support from the Emergency Board or Legislative Assembly if the costs of implementing this measure exceed currently budgeted election expenditures.

Counties report that there is minimal fiscal impact for implementation of this measure.