

## Fiscal Highlights

### Implementation Funding for S.B. 54 (2014 General Session) - Clare Tobin Lence

When [S.B. 54, Elections Amendments](#), passed during the 2014 General Session, the [fiscal note](#) read "Enactment of this bill could increase staff time and facilities costs to verify signatures. These costs are dependent upon the number of signatures submitted to the Lt. Governor's Office for verification." No funds were appropriated to the Lieutenant Governor's Office at that time, or to local governments that will oversee part of the signature verification process. During the 2015 General Session, the Lt. Governor's Office received a one-time General Fund appropriation of \$250,000 to implement S.B. 54, which will first take effect for elections in 2016.

The actual costs of S.B. 54 implementation are still largely unknown. The main variable is how many petition signatures will need to be verified for candidates seeking to use the new signature route (as opposed to the other, pre-existing caucus/convention route) to being listed on a primary ballot. Assuming that all candidates gathered the requisite number of signatures -- including those that would also pursue the caucus/convention route -- in 2012 the Lt. Governor's Office estimated 700,000 signatures. Some of these would be verified by counties, for county-level offices and single-county House or Senate districts, but most would be verified at the state level by the Lt. Governor's Office. This represents a significant expansion of the role of the Lt. Governor's Office, which ordinarily does not engage in this type of verification.

Costs for S.B. 54 implementation are primarily due to personnel. Temporary employees will be used to verify petition signatures. At minimum, the Lt. Governor's Office may have only two weeks to verify signatures between the candidate deadline for submission and the office deadline for verification. Other costs include a facility and computers for the temporary employees, a delivery truck to move boxes of petitions, warehouse space to store petitions temporarily, and software development and support through the Department of Technology Services.

At 700,000 signatures, the Lt. Governor's Office initially estimated costs each even-numbered year of \$374,000. Further consideration has lowered that figure closer to \$250,000 but it remains speculative. Of note, candidates who intend to gather signatures must declare their intent to do so to the Lt. Governor's Office, and they will be able to gather them approximately from January to April 2016. Some additional information will therefore be available during the 2016 General Session, which may inform whether supplemental funds for the Lt. Governor's Office or local entities are required for S.B. 54 implementation.