

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Session 2005

Legislative Fiscal Note

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 1256 (Second Edition)

SHORT TITLE: Rights for Ex-Offenders.

SPONSOR(S): Representative Pierce

| FISCAL IMPACT | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Yes (X) | No () | No Estimate Available () | | |
| | <u>FY 2005-06</u> | <u>FY 2006-07</u> | <u>FY 2007-08</u> | <u>FY 2008-09</u> | <u>FY 2009-10</u> |
| REVENUES: | | | | | |
| EXPENDITURES: | | | | | |
| Dept. of Correction | | | No substantial impact anticipated. | | |
| State Board of Elections | | | Up to \$6,000 but see Assumptions and Methodology | | |
| POSITIONS (cumulative): | | | | | |
| PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT(S) & PROGRAM(S) AFFECTED: Department of Correction, State Board of Elections | | | | | |
| EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2006 | | | | | |

BILL SUMMARY: This bill enacts new G.S. 163-82.20A to require the State Board of Elections, Department of Correction, and the Administrative Office of the Courts to jointly develop and implement educational programs to inform felons, upon the restoration of citizenship, of their right to vote and provide an opportunity to register to vote.

ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY:

The Department of Correction (DOC) currently distributes a certificate of unconditional discharge to offenders upon the restoration of citizenship per Chapter 13 of the General Statutes. To facilitate voter registration and the education of offenders as to their voting rights when citizenship is restored, DOC anticipates that it would provide offenders with additional written educational materials and a voter registration form, which could be added to the offender's exit packet. DOC does not expect the distribution of such materials to entail a substantial cost.

The State Board of Elections (SBE) is responsible for the administration of the elections process which includes voter registration and voter education. The SBE believes that to comply with the requirements of the bill they must educate DOC personnel to dispel the misconception that ex-felons are never allowed to vote. Their plan would be to attend any continuing education sessions that the DOC sponsors to educate the DOC personnel so that they can accurately convey information to the offenders when their citizenship rights are restored. They estimate that their cost for materials and travel to educate DOC personnel would be \$2,500. Fiscal Research believes that the education of the DOC personnel is not unreasonable. However, we do believe that it goes beyond the requirements of the bill which requires, at a minimum, that written notice be provided to the person whose citizenship rights are restored. Fiscal Research, therefore, agrees with DOC's estimate that the educational material can be provided in the exit packet at little to no additional cost.

The State Board of Elections is also responsible for providing voter registration forms. They estimate that it would cost \$7,500 to print and ship 100,000 voter registration forms to the prisons and to the probation/parole officers. Their estimate is based on their understanding that approximately 89,000 persons were discharged from prisons and from community service programs in 2004. Based on the information provided by SBE, Fiscal Research believes that providing 100,000 voter registration forms is not unreasonable. However, to comply with the legal mandates of the National Voter Registration Act, the State Board of Elections prints approximately 6 million forms in an election year to provide to social services agencies, libraries, and to groups sponsoring voter registration drives. We have no basis for believing that the 6 million-form supply is not sufficient to provide the forms for the offenders who citizenship rights are restored. Voter registration forms are ordered in boxes of 1,000 at a cost of \$50 per box for printing and another \$10 per box for shipping. If, however, the current supply is not sufficient, the cost for each additional box of 1,000 forms would be \$60 or up to a total of \$6,000 for 100,000 additional forms.

SOURCES OF DATA: Department of Correction, State Board of Elections

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS: None

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