



# Ohio Legislative Service Commission

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## Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

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**Bill:** [H.B. 118 of the 130th G.A.](#)

**Date:** June 7, 2013

**Status:** As Introduced

**Sponsor:** Rep. Roegner

**Local Impact Statement Procedure Required:** Yes

**Contents:** Revises the ballot language requirements for bond issues

### State and Local Fiscal Highlights

- The bill requires the inclusion of additional information for both statewide and local bond issues appearing on a ballot. The additional information concerning the cost of the proposed debt could increase ballot size, and in turn, ballot advertising and ballot printing costs for the state or affected political subdivision.
- During the 2012 election cycle, 25 bond-only and 27 combination issues involving bonds and tax levies appeared on ballots in political subdivisions across the state.

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### Detailed Fiscal Analysis

#### Overview

The bill revises the information and content that is required to be provided in the ballot language and official explanation for constitutional issues to authorize the issuance of bonds by the state, or the issuance of bonds by political subdivisions. Specifically, the bill requires a greater amount of information to be provided pertaining to these bond issues, namely the total amount of outstanding debt, the per capita obligation, and the total estimated debt and per capita obligation of existing and new debt. The state and political subdivisions are statutorily required to advertise ballot issues in a newspaper of general circulation for at least two consecutive weeks. County boards of elections are also responsible for printing absentee ballots, and in some instances, paper ballots for elections. By increasing the length of these ballot issues, the bill could also increase ballot advertising and printing costs. Collectively, the magnitude of these increases would depend on how much the ballot issue increased in length, the advertising rate paid by either the state or political subdivisions, and the number of bond issues, statewide and local, that appear on any particular ballot.

## **Statewide bond issues**

The bill requires that the ballot language and official explanation for a proposed constitutional amendment authorizing the state to issue bonds to include additional information. Specifically, the bill requires the additional information to include the estimated per capita obligation resulting from these bonds, the amount of the state's outstanding debt, and the per capita obligation resulting from this overall debt. The bill also requires the Secretary of State to post the ballot language, explanations, and arguments for the proposed constitutional amendment on the Secretary of State's web site at least 45 days prior to the election. The Secretary of State must also direct county boards of elections to post this information on their web sites as well.

## **Local bond issues**

The bill requires ballot language and official explanations of local bond issues to contain additional information. Specifically, the bill requires this additional information to include the total amount of outstanding debt, the per capita obligation of outstanding debt, and the total estimated amount of debt and the per capital obligation of the new total, which consists of existing debt plus the new debt authorized by the issue should it pass. The bill also requires the applicable board of elections to post this language on its web site 45 days prior to the election. If the board does not maintain a web site, this language must be posted on the state's public notice web site. It should also be noted that the provisions of this portion of the bill would also apply to county agricultural societies seeking to pass a levy for funding.

## **Fiscal impact**

### **Ballot advertising costs**

Under current law, the state and political subdivisions are required to publish notice of ballot issues containing the proposed ballot language in a newspaper of general circulation for at least two consecutive weeks prior to the election. The bill requires additional information to be provided for ballot issues that pertain to the issuance of bonds. This additional information would increase the size of the ballot measure, which would therefore increase advertising costs. The total magnitude of such a cost increase would ultimately depend on the total increase in length of such measures and the ballot advertising rate paid by the state or political subdivision. As an example, *The Columbus Dispatch's* political advertising rate is \$6.13 per line, per day, on publications appearing Monday through Saturday, and \$6.94 per line, per day, on publications appearing on Sunday. Ballot advertising costs for statewide ballot measures are paid for by the Secretary of State through the Statewide Ballot Advertising Fund (Fund 5FH0), which consists of GRF transfers from the Controlling Board. Local issue ballot advertising costs are paid from the applicable political subdivision's general fund. During the 2012 primary, special, and general election cycle, there were 25 local bond issues and 27 combination bond and tax levy issues appearing on ballots in political subdivisions across the state.

**Ballot printing costs**

Under current law, county boards of elections are responsible for all the costs of conducting an election (except statewide ballot advertising costs) in all elections that are not special elections. These costs include preparing, printing, and mailing absent voter's ballots, and having paper ballots at precincts as backup ballots. The bill would lengthen bond issues on ballots, which could in turn increase printing costs, and possibly, mailing costs. However, the magnitude of this increase is uncertain and depends on the increase in ballot size and the number of bond issues appearing on a ballot.

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