

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Ethics and Elections

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BILL: SB 228

INTRODUCER: Senators Clemens and Richter

SUBJECT: Online Voter Application

DATE: March 11, 2015

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

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	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Carlton</u>	<u>Roberts</u>	<u>EE</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>ATD</u>	<u>                    </u>
3.	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>                    </u>

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**I. Summary:**

SB 228 directs the Division of Elections to develop an operational, online voter registration system by January 1, 2016.

The Division of Elections is tasked with establishing the secure Internet website and developing security measures to prevent unauthorized tampering with a voter's registration information, including the use of a unique identifier for each applicant. The system must also comply with certain federal laws to ensure equal access to voters with disabilities, with accessibility experts included in the development phase; further, the system's accessibility must be verified by an "independent body with expertise on the matter."

The bill takes effect July 1, 2015 (although none of its provisions will be implemented until at least January 1, 2016, when the online voter registration system is up and running).

**II. Present Situation:**

As of December 2014, the National Conference on State Legislatures ("NCSL") found that:

- 20 states offered online voter registration;
- 4 states had passed legislation to create online registration systems, but had not yet implemented them; and,
- 3 states offered some form of limited online voter registration.<sup>1</sup>

Florida was not included among these states, despite the fact that it has an electronic system for submitting voter registration applications from Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles

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<sup>1</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures website, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/electronic-or-online-voter-registration.aspx> (last accessed 3.11.2015).

(“DHSMV”) offices<sup>2</sup>. Floridians not registering electronically at a DHSMV office must fill out a paper voter registration application and return it to their local county supervisor of elections, or to any of the following entities: any supervisor of elections’ office in the state, a voter registration agency including an armed forces recruitment office, a public library, or the Division of Elections.<sup>3</sup> The division’s website, and most if not all supervisor’s websites, contain an electronic version of the official Florida Voter Registration Application which can be printed out, sworn and affirmed by the applicant’s signature, and mailed.<sup>4</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Beginning January 1, 2016, the bill creates an online voter registration system for registering first-time voters and updating existing voter registrations. The Division of Elections is tasked with establishing the secure Internet website and developing security measures to prevent unauthorized tampering with a voter’s registration information, including the use of a unique identifier for each applicant. The system must also comply with certain federal laws to ensure equal access to voters with disabilities, with accessibility experts included in the development phase; further, the system’s accessibility must be verified by an “independent body with expertise on the matter.”

Upon submission of a completed online voter registration application, the website must generate an immediate electronic confirmation that the supervisor has received it and will provide instruction with respect to checking the status of the application.

Specifically, the new online voting system will:

- Compare an applicant’s driver’s license number or Florida ID number with DHSMV records, to confirm the name and birth date of the applicant.
- *If the applicant’s name and birth date are consistent*, electronically transmit the application to the appropriate supervisor of elections along with the applicant’s digital signature (if he or she has on file with DHSMV), in which case the application process can proceed electronically.
- *If an otherwise eligible applicant’s name and birth cannot be verified, or if the applicant has no driver’s license or Florida ID card*, issue a unique identifier number and electronically

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<sup>2</sup> DHSMV’s staff analysis on SB 784 (2014) provides:

Currently, driver license examiners ask driver license or identification card applicants if the applicant would like to apply to register to vote or update his or her current voter registration information during the credential process. If so, an electronic voter registration application is completed, with a digital signature, and the voter oath is administered. The voter registration application includes data specific to the voter registration process, such as whether the person is a convicted felon, party affiliation, military status, whether the person needs voting assistance and previous voter registration data. The voter application also requires the examiner to re-key the customer’s address in order to verify it against a Department of State database, as required by law. The customer receives a printed application for his or her review. At the close of business, the day’s voter registration applications, changes, and declinations are submitted electronically to the Department of State.

DHSMV’s 2014 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis, *SB 784*, at p.1 (January 31, 2014) (Section 2.1., Present Situation), available at, <http://abar.laspbs.state.fl.us/ABAR/Document.aspx?id=2773&yr=2014> (last visited 3.11.2015).

<sup>3</sup> Florida Department of State website, <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/voter-registration/voter-reg.shtml> (last accessed 3.11.2015).

<sup>4</sup> Florida Voter Registration Application Form, available at the Division of Elections website, <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/pdf/webappform.pdf> (last visited 3.11.2015).

submit the application to the appropriate supervisor for disposition pursuant to s. 97.073, F.S.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, SB 228 authorizes the Division of Elections to establish procedures for applicants who do not have a Florida driver's license or a Florida identification card.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

#### **V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

##### **Expenditures; nonrecurring (DHSMV)**

In its agency bill analysis on SB 784 (2014), which was nearly identical to this bill, the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles estimated that it will take about 270 nonrecurring programming hours at a cost of \$20,400 to provide verification for the name, date of birth, Fla. Driver's license number, or Florida identification card number after voter registration applications are submitted online. The DHSMV has not yet provided an agency bill analysis on SB 228 (2015).

##### **Expenditures; recurring/nonrecurring (DOS)**

The Florida Division of Elections has yet to complete an agency bill analysis or provide a fiscal estimate on SB 228. As such, the nonrecurring costs to develop the system and the recurring costs to maintain and operate it are indeterminate at this time.

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<sup>5</sup> Section 97.073, F.S., requires a Supervisor of Elections to request any required information missing from the voter registration application

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill creates section 97.0525 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.