

Department of Planning and Budget
2025 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

PUBLISHED: 1/31/2025 1:54 PM

ORIGINAL

Bill Number: HB2586 **Patron:** Cordoza
Bill Title: Voter registration; automatic registration; hunting and fishing license applicants; resident concealed handgun permit applicants.

Bill Summary: Provides for automatic voter registration by the clerk of any circuit court of the Commonwealth and the Department of Wildlife Resources upon the application for any hunting or fishing license or Virginia resident concealed handgun permit. The bill also requires any such applicant be offered a separate application to be placed on the permanent absentee voter list.

Budget Amendment Necessary: Yes **Items Impacted:** Item 77, Item 369
Explanation: See below.

Fiscal Summary: There is a state fiscal impact resulting from the provisions of this bill. The fiscal impacts to the Department of Elections and the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) are detailed below. The fiscal impact to the Circuit Courts is currently unknown; once this information becomes available, the fiscal impact will be updated accordingly.

General Fund Expenditure Impact:

<u>Agency</u>	<u>FY2025</u>	<u>FY2026</u>	<u>FY2027</u>	<u>FY2028</u>	<u>FY2029</u>	<u>FY2030</u>
The Department of Elections	-	\$143,000	-	-	-	-
The Department of Wildlife Resources	-	\$218,500	-	-	-	-
TOTAL						

Fiscal Analysis: There is a state fiscal impact as a result of providing automatic voter registration for anyone who applies for a hunting or fishing license. This bill would require the Department of Elections (ELECT) to modify the Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS), the State Voter Registration System (SVRS), and other supporting systems. The updates would support receiving, matching, and processing new electronic voter registration applications that are currently processed manually. ELECT estimates a one-time cost of \$143,000 for contractors to make the required changes to the necessary systems. The cost is based on an estimated 1,100 hours of labor at an average rate of \$130.00 per hour.

Department of Planning and Budget
2025 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

The bill requires that citizenship questions be added to static and online applications for licenses or any related document or renewal under Chapter 3 and institute a new reporting requirement to share this information continuously with the Virginia Department of Elections. DWR's Go Outdoors Virginia solution which is used for issuing licenses will have to be modified to update existing citizenship questions as well as the licensing/renewal workflows, forms, reports, and data fields to accommodate. The bill's estimated system modification cost is \$218,500, broken down as follows: \$10,500 for form updates, \$7,000 for data transfer to Elections, \$5,000 for customer service training, \$28,000 for creating a citizenship module, \$112,000 for updating resident licensing workflows, and \$56,000 for address maintenance updates. These costs are based on an hourly rate of \$175.

The bulk of operating expenses at DWR is supported by the Game Protection Fund. In addition to license and fee revenue, the Game Protection Fund receives transfers from two general fund sources, the watercraft sales and use tax and the sales tax on hunting and fishing equipment. The Appropriation Act authorizes the transfer of up to \$7.3 million in each year from revenue generated from the watercraft sales and use tax and up to \$12.2 million each year from revenue generated from the sales tax on hunting and fishing equipment. These funds cover increases in compensation and other centrally mandated adjustments. DWR also supports unbudgeted and unavoidable one-time expenses with balances in the Lifetime Hunting and Fishing Endowment Fund. Balances in this fund are rarely used, given that federal support is impacted by amounts kept in endowment. Over the last three fiscal years, revenues to both funds have not kept up with expenditures, resulting in a reduction in reserves.

VCSC has stated that even though the provisions of the bill expand the scope of a Class 5 felony, there will be no minimum \$50,000 impact. By expanding the process to automatically register voters and potentially increasing the number of Class 5 felony convictions for election fraud, the proposal may increase the future state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth. In the past six fiscal years, however, no offender convicted of a Class 5 felony under § 24.2-1016 has received an active state responsible (prison) term. Therefore, the proposal is not expected to impact prison bed space needs during the six-year window specified by § 30-19.1:4 for legislative impact statements.

The fiscal impact to Circuit Courts is unknown at this time. When more information becomes available the fiscal impact will be updated accordingly.

Other: Similar to HB 2057.