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Voter ID Bill Heads to Conference, Will Add to State Spending

Conferees will have to face the reality that new provisions will cost up to $1.2 million

RICHMOND, VA – Senate and House of Delegates conferees will have to figure out not only how to resolve the differences between two bills that will significantly change voter identification requirements in Virginia (SB1 and HB9), they’ll also have to face the fiscal reality that the new requirements are costly.

According to recent analysis published by The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, implementing the new voter ID requirements of either of the bills will cost between half a million to over a million dollars and involve significant public education efforts, staff training, and provisional ballot administration.

“So far debate on these bills hasn’t adequately addressed these significant costs,” says Michael Cassidy, president and CEO of The Commonwealth Institute.

Under the bills, the voters who show up to the polls without an acceptable form of identification would be required to vote provisionally, resulting in significant implementation costs. The Institute’s analysis examined voter ID laws in Maryland, North Carolina, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nevada, Georgia and South Carolina, and put the cost for Virginia between $522,263 and $1,258,959.

In a year of budget tightening and program cuts in other areas, the costs to the state represent significant tradeoffs. The cost of implementing these voter ID requirements is the rough equivalent of providing health care to between 396 and 954 Virginia children or providing support for an additional 109 to 262 Virginia children to attend high-quality pre-school.

“Rather than pushing a costly and misguided solution to a nonexistent problem, Virginia could be investing this money in ways that strengthen our economy and build jobs for a brighter future for our children,” says Cassidy.

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About The Commonwealth Institute
The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities and Virginia as a whole. Visit www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org for more information.

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