



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

AUDITOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133

SUZANNE M. BUMP, ESQ.
AUDITOR

TEL (617) 727-2075
FAX (617) 727-3014

May 27, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

As you know, in February 2017 my office declared parts of the early voting law to be unfunded mandates. Since then, we have worked together after both the 2016 and 2018 general elections to provide reimbursements for eligible costs. This year the opportunity for early voting was extended to the March 3, 2020 presidential primary, and communities were instructed to hold five days of voting in February consistent with previous requirements. Guided by this precedent, and after communication with all 351 municipalities, I am recommending that the Legislature appropriate and Governor Baker approve \$727,169.37 in funding to reimburse these costs.

In order to compile and certify this total, my office sent an electronic survey to elections officials (primarily city and town clerks) in all 351 municipalities, asking them specific questions about the expenditures they incurred to meet the requirements of the addition of early voting for the presidential primary and any parallel elections held at the same time including state special elections and local elections. Our original mandate determination found that some additional expenses – such as overtime for regular employees or the cost of additional election workers – incurred to support early voting, constituted an unfunded mandate, thus requiring reimbursement from the Commonwealth. These expenses, having been electronically submitted and carefully examined by our Division of Local Mandates, comprise the total cited above.

Further, as you contemplate additional expansion of early voting and absentee voting, I respectfully urge you to be mindful of their associated costs and the advisability of codifying the process that we are currently using to collect and convey to you the amounts owed to communities. This office can recommend legislative language to facilitate this, and we will continue to cooperate with legislative leaders and Secretary Galvin on future funding requirements for the mandate.

If you have questions on this document or the detailed numbers attached, please contact the Director of the Division of Local Mandates, Ben Tafoya, at 857-242-5428.

Early voting certification

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I am grateful for the continuing opportunity to work on this issue with you and your colleagues. Early voting has already proven to be a valuable addition to our democratic processes; establishing a formal procedure to fund the expenses incurred by our municipalities will make it that much stronger.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S M Bump", written in a cursive style.

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth

cc. His Excellency, Charles D. Baker, Governor of the Commonwealth
The Honorable William Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
The Honorable Robert A. DeLeo, Speaker of the House of Representatives
The Honorable Karen E. Spilka, President of the Senate
The Honorable Bradley Jones, Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
The Honorable Bruce Tarr, Minority Leader of the Senate
The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair, House Committee on Ways & Means
The Honorable Michael Rodrigues, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways & Means
The Honorable John Lawn, House Chair, Joint Committee on Election Laws
The Honorable Barry Finegold, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Election Laws