

New same-day registration, voting rules could cost Kane County \$2M

[GENEVA](#) – Kane County could face nearly \$2 million in additional costs because of an extension of the grace-period registration for voters bill.

Signed by then-Gov. Pat Quinn in January, Senate Bill 172 requires same-day voter registration at every polling place for countywide elections if a county's population is greater than 100,000, or if it has an electronic poll book – an electronic list of all eligible voters in the county.

Kane County has more than 515,000 residents, so it will have to foot the cost of adding two election officials and one voting machine to more than 95 polling places in the county, Kane County Clerk Jack Cunningham said.

These additional election workers will be deputy registrars who will have to be paid, said Suzanne Fahnestock, chief deputy clerk and director of elections.

In order to accommodate the same-day registration, the county also will need to perform software updates and participate in an Electronic Registration Information Center to keep track of eligible voters, according to government documents.

"The income of the county has gone down drastically," Cunningham said, referring to more than \$2 million lost when the county jail stopped housing federal prisoners. "It's been mandated, so they have to do it."

Also, it takes 13 minutes to register people to vote, Cunningham said.

"Lines could be blocks long at every polling place," Cunningham said.

The Kane County Board voted recently to support a resolution opposing the law as a new, unfunded mandate. The legislation will affect 20 of the state's 102 counties. DeKalb, DuPage, Will and McHenry counties also are among those affected.

"This is going to be a very expensive mandate for county governments for counties who fit the criteria, and Kane County is one of them," said [State Rep. Keith Wheeler](#), R-Oswego.

In the past, Kane County had five same-day voter registration locations in St. Charles, Carpentersville, two in Elgin and one at the Kane County Government Center in Geneva, Cunningham said.

Wheeler and [State Rep. Steven Andersson](#), R-Geneva, co-sponsored legislation, House Bill 2936, that would counteract the mandate by requiring only one same-day registration site per 10,000 residents in counties with more than 100,000 people.

It remains in the Rules Committee where it was referred in March.

State Majority Leader Rep. [Barbara Flynn Currie](#), D-Chicago, who is the chairwoman of the Rules Committee, said she supports efforts to make it easier for people to vote, so that bill is not likely to receive additional consideration.

"I believe strongly that people ought to be able to exercise the franchise and to vote," Currie said. "Democracy is not a spectator sport. There is not a lot of enthusiasm among my colleagues to dilute the right to vote and exercise the franchise. I stand behind Senate Bill 172."

Currie said Kane County should figure out a way to meet this requirement "without spending the county fortune."

"Other counties are able to meet the mandate without whining," Currie said.

Published in the *Kane County Chronicle* on July 23, 2015.