

Honolulu

Honolulu City Clerk Wants Big Increase In Price Of Voter Data

A new measure would also dramatically raise the price for certifying documents and providing proof of voter registration.

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By Anita Hofschneider    / October 12, 2017

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The Honolulu City Council is considering tripling the cost of obtaining voter registration data for Oahu.

City Council Chairman Ron Menor introduced [Bill 90](#) on behalf of City Clerk Glen Takahashi.

The proposal comes as the Office of Information Practices [separately seeks to raise the price](#) of accessing other types of public records.



Honolulu City Council Chairman Ron Menor says he's open to discussing raising fees for voter registration data.

Bill 90 would increase the price of obtaining voter registration data from \$250 to \$750.

It also would raise the cost of a certificate that proves you are a Honolulu voter and the price of getting a document certified by the city, in both cases from 50 cents to \$5.

Takahashi thinks the changes make sense given inflation and how other city fees have grown over the years. He says the city hasn't changed the cost of a voter certificate since 1962 or the price of voter registration data since 1982.

"Nobody likes raising fees," he said, explaining that the money goes into the city's general fund. "I think it's high time that we did have a discussion about that."

Takahashi said the city received 307 requests for voter certificates last fiscal year. The certificates can be used to prove residency for purposes like kamaaina discounts at the city's golf course or university scholarships.

Takahashi says that the city only received about 30 requests for voter registration data last fiscal year, mainly from service bureaus that do political data processing, political parties and large campaigns.

Tim Vandever, who leads the Democratic Party of Hawaii, says that at first glance, he doesn't think that the fee increase would hurt Democratic candidates.

The party regularly buys the data, cleans it up and adds additional information to it. Candidates buy the data from the party, along with training and other services.

But the increase could make it more expensive for smaller parties and independent candidates to access the data.

"It's such a big increase," said Corie Tanida from Common Cause Hawaii, a nonprofit dedicated to open government. "Price should not be the determining factor whether one requests information in the first place."

Sylvia Litchfield, volunteer coordinator for the Green Party of Hawaii, said the organization hasn't purchased voter data because of its shoestring budget and an increase in the cost would make it even less likely to do so.

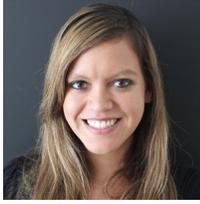
"The extra \$200 or something could buy some yard signs or newspaper ads," she said, adding that the Green Party doesn't accept corporate donations. Raising the price of voter data is "just one more thing that makes it harder for low-budget people to run," she said.

Takahashi agreed it's uncommon for small campaigns to buy the data directly from the city anyway.

"In fairness (the bill) at least deserves a discussion even if it doesn't pass," he said. "I think the public hearing process is where they can beat me over the head."

Civil Beat's Natanya Friedheim contributed to this report.

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