



SF 410 – Elections, Primary Runoff (LSB1625SV)

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Fiscal Note Version – New

Description

[Senate File 410](#) requires that a primary runoff election be held to determine a party's nominee in the event of an inconclusive primary election. An inconclusive primary election occurs when there is not a sufficient number of candidates from one political party who received at least 35.0% of the vote in a primary election to fill the necessary number of nominations for an office. This includes elections for county offices, statewide offices, congressional offices, and members of the General Assembly.

Background

- Under current law, the winner of an inconclusive primary election is determined by applicable delegates at convention, and expenses are paid by the applicable political party.
- In Iowa, one congressional district seat in the 2002 election and in the 2014 election was determined by convention.
- The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reports that 10 states have provisions for primary runoff elections: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, and Vermont. Vermont only holds runoffs in the event of a tie, and South Dakota only holds runoffs for the offices of U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, and Governor.

Assumptions

- Each county auditor will determine how to staff, equip, and supply the election site with precinct officials and the appropriate quantity of ballots.
- Based on responses from 56 counties, the average cost of a special election per capita is \$1.18. The highest cost is \$4.21, the lowest cost is \$0.33, and the median cost is \$1.07. It is assumed these numbers would hold statewide, but \$1.10 will be used for the calculations below.
- Precinct workers' pay varies from county to county but averages approximately \$8.50 per hour, plus travel reimbursement, training, and supplies. Travel costs in rural precincts will be higher than in precincts in cities. Each precinct has approximately five workers working a 16-hour day.
- The cost per ballot is \$0.25, and the cost for postage and envelopes per absentee ballot is \$1.68.
- County election administration costs are estimated to be \$30 per hour per person, including base pay, overtime pay, and benefits.
- Publication costs per county are \$2,000.
- The voting equipment programming cost per county is \$3,000.
- The calculations assume a 25.0% voter turnout.
- The average cost per precinct for officials, equipment, and supplies is approximately \$1,470.
- Some county supervisors are elected "at large" by the entire county, while others are elected by a specific district within the county. The smallest district is assumed to include seven precincts.

- Primary runoff elections happen infrequently but are assumed to happen more frequently at the county level than at the state or congressional level.

Fiscal Impact

All costs for a primary runoff election would be paid at the county level. The effect on county expenditures would depend on the number of precincts involved. Cost estimates range from approximately \$10,000 for seven precincts in a county local election for a specific county board of supervisors seat; to an approximate average of \$849,800 for each of the four congressional districts; and up to \$3.4 million for a statewide runoff election.

In the event of a statewide primary runoff, the Secretary of State's Office will incur approximately \$35,000 in additional computer programming costs and staff overtime expenses.

Sources

Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC)
Secretary of State's Office
National Conference of State Legislatures

/s/ Holly M. Lyons

March 5, 2019

The fiscal note for this Bill was prepared pursuant to Joint Rule 17 and the Iowa Code. Data used in developing this fiscal note is available from the Fiscal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency upon request.
