



[HF 692](#) – State and Local Elections (LSB2429HV)
Analyst: Christopher Ubben (515.725.0134) chris.ubben@legis.iowa.gov
Fiscal Note Version – As amended by Senate Amendment [H-1244](#)

Description

[House File 692](#) as amended by Senate Amendment H-1244 makes numerous changes to the Iowa Code related to State and local elections. The Divisions expected to have fiscal impacts are highlighted by section below.

Division VII — Conduct of Elections

Section 56: Requires each county commissioner of elections to ensure by February 26, 2020, that each election precinct uses an electronic poll book. There are currently five counties not using electronic poll books.

Fiscal Impact

The five counties that are not currently using electronic poll books (Mitchell, Carroll, Tama, Polk, and Lucas) would incur a total initial equipment cost of \$252,200 and an increase in annual operating costs of \$27,800 for each county.

Section 58: Permits the State Commissioner of Elections to oversee the activities of a county commissioner of elections during a period beginning 60 days before an election and ending 60 days after an election. The State Commissioner of Elections currently employs 6.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions capable of overseeing the activities of county commissioners of elections.

Assumptions

To oversee elections in remote counties, the Secretary of State's Office would incur travel, lodging, and other related expenses.

Fiscal Impact

There would be a minimal fiscal impact from this section that would vary depending on the number of counties being overseen each election as well as the geographic location and duration of the oversight.

Section 65: Creates a uniform 8:00 p.m. polling precinct closing time for all elections. Under current Iowa Code section [49.73](#), polling places close at 9:00 p.m. for State primary and general elections, other partisan elections, and any other concurrently held elections.

Assumptions

There are an estimated five election officials at each of the 1,677 precincts in Iowa at an estimated cost of \$10 per hour.

Fiscal Impact

Closing polls at 8:00 p.m. for all elections would result in a total average annual savings to Iowa counties of \$100,000.

Section 68: Requires a runoff election to be held if more than the requisite number of persons are found to have an equal and highest number of votes for certain county, State, or national offices. Under current Iowa Code section [50.44](#), tie votes are decided by lot.

Assumptions

- Each county auditor would 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 \$10 per hour. 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.
- All costs for a primary runoff election would be paid at the county level.

Fiscal Impact

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 runoff, the Secretary of State's Office would incur approximately \$35,000 in additional computer programming costs and staff overtime expenses.

Division IX — Voter Registration

Sections 96 and 97: Requires the State Registrar of Voters to include the times during which polling places will be open on election days on voter identification cards and on acknowledgments sent after March 1, 2022, as defined by Iowa Code sections [48A.10A](#) and [48A.26B](#) respectively.

Assumptions

The Secretary of State's Office estimates approximately 10 hours of vendor labor at an hourly rate of \$80 to \$120 per hour to implement each required system change.

Fiscal Impact

The total project cost to implement both changes is between \$1,600 and \$2,400.

Section 99: Requires the State Commissioner of Elections to mail a notice of inactivity during the month of January in each year following a presidential election to each voter whose name did not appear on the national change of address program, who did not participate in the previous presidential election, and who has not registered to vote at a new address or reported a change to an existing registration. Voters receiving such notice would then be marked inactive. Under current Iowa Code section [48A.28](#), national change of address program mailings are required to be mailed in the first quarter of each calendar year to voters who have not voted in two or more consecutive general elections. Total voter turnout in Iowa for the most recent presidential election was 72.8% of 2.2 million total eligible voters.

Assumptions

Requiring notices to be mailed in January following presidential elections rather than in the first quarter of each calendar year will result in three members of the Secretary of State's staff each accruing 15 hours of overtime.

Fiscal Impact

The cost of the required overtime hours is approximately \$8,800. Additional costs would be passed onto counties for "rush" printing costs.

Division XII — Absentee Ballot Counting

Sections 122 – 125: Requires the State Commissioner of Elections to print a postal service barcode on an absentee ballot envelope before the envelope is sent to the voter. "Postal service barcode" is defined as a barcode purchased from the United States Postal Service that is used to sort and track letters and flat packages.

Assumptions

In 2018, there were 50,900 absentee ballots mailed during the primary election and 535,800 absentee ballots mailed during the general election for a total of 586,700 absentee ballots. Printing costs are estimated to be \$0.03 per ballot. Each county would also incur a \$400 printer fee.

Fiscal Impact

The total cost of printing ballots would be approximately \$17,600. The statewide expected cost

for county printing fees is \$39,600. The total cost of implementing this provision is \$57,200 per general election year. Numbers for city and school absentee ballots are unavailable, and therefore the cost of non-general elections cannot be determined at this time.

Total Fiscal Impact

The net fiscal impact of [HF 692](#) as amended would include the following:

- One-time equipment costs of \$252,200 in the first year of implementation.
- Anticipated annual fiscal impact between \$88,000 to approximately \$3.4 million in additional expenditures. This represents the combined fiscal impact to the State and counties. [House File 192](#) is estimated to cost the Secretary of State’s Office from \$39,000 to \$74,800 annually.

Additional fiscal impact detail is shown in **Table 1** below.

**Table 1
HF 692 — Section Detail of Fiscal Summary**

	Section	One Time Costs	Annual Net Impact Low Range	Annual Net Impact High Range	Entity
Elec. Poll Books	Sec. 56	\$ 252,200	\$ -139,000	\$ -139,000	County
County Election Oversight	Sec. 58		Minimal	Minimal	State
Poll Closing Time Change	Sec. 65		100,000	100,000	County
Runoff Elections	Sec. 68		-10,000	-3,435,000	County and State
Voter Registration	Sec. 96 & 97		-1,600	-2,400	State
Notice of Inactivity	Sec. 98		-8,800	-8,800	State
Barcode on Absentee Ballots	Sec. 122 - 125		-28,600	-28,600	State
Total		\$ 252,200	\$ -88,000	\$ -3,513,800	

Sources

Office of the Secretary of State
Iowa State Association of Counties
LSA Calculations

/s/ Holly M. Lyons

April 22, 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.