



SF 483 – Runoff Primary Elections (LSB1315SV.1)
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Fiscal Note Version – As passed by the Senate

Description

[Senate File 483](#) 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 occurs when there is not a sufficient number of candidates, from one political party, that 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

- For an inconclusive primary election under current law, the winner is determined by applicable delegates at convention and expenses are paid by the applicable political party.
- In Iowa, during the 2002 and 2014 elections, a congressional district seat in each of those elections went to convention.
- The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reports that eleven states have provisions for primary runoff elections: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, 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

- There are 1,681 voting precincts in Iowa.
- Each county auditor will determine how to staff, equip, and supply the election with precinct officials and the appropriate quantity of ballots.
- 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 precincts in the city. Each precinct has approximately five workers per precinct 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 is approximately \$1,470.
- Some county supervisors are elected "at large" by the entire county and some 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, rather than 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 will depend on the number of precincts involved. Costs range from approximately \$10,000 for seven precincts in a county local election for a specific County Board of Supervisor seat up to \$2.5 million for a statewide election, such as the Secretary of Agriculture or Attorney General.

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. The costs will be paid from the General Fund appropriation.

Sources

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

/s/ Holly M. Lyons

March 16, 2017

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.
