

CHAPTER 277

SCHOOL ELECTIONS

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277.1 Regular election.

The regular election shall be held biennially on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each odd-numbered year in each school district for the election of officers of the district and merged area and for the purpose of submitting to the voters any matter authorized by law.

[C51, §1111, 1114; R60, §2027, 2030, 2031; C73, §1717 – 1719; C97, §2746, 2751; C24, §4194, 4211; C27, §4194, 4211, 4216-b1; C31, 35, §4216-c1; C39, §**4216.01**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.1]

[83 Acts, ch 101, §63](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1115, §18, 21](#); [2017 Acts, ch 155, §8 – 10](#)

Referred to in [§39.3](#), [260C.15](#), [279.8B](#), [423F.3](#), [423F.4](#)

277.2 Elections on public measures.

Unless otherwise stated, the date of an election on a public measure authorized to be held by a school district is limited to the dates specified in [section 39.2, subsection 4](#), paragraph “c”.

[C97, §2750; S13, §2750; C24, 27, §4197; C31, 35, §4216-c2; C39, §**4216.02**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.2]

[89 Acts, ch 135, §70](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1115, §45, 71](#)

277.3 Election laws applicable.

The provisions of [chapters 39 through 53](#) shall apply to the conduct of all school elections and the school elections shall be conducted by the county commissioner of elections, except as otherwise specifically provided in [this chapter](#).

[C97, §2754; S13, §2754; C24, 27, §4204; C31, 35, §4216-c33; C39, §**4216.33**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, §277.33; C77, 79, 81, §277.3]

[2020 Acts, ch 1063, §126](#)

Referred to in [§275.25](#)

277.4 Nominations required.

1. Nomination papers for all candidates for election to office in each school district shall be filed with the secretary of the school board not more than seventy-one days nor less than forty-seven days before the election. Nomination petitions shall be filed not later than 5:00 p.m. on the last day for filing. If the school board secretary is not readily available during normal office hours, the secretary may designate a full-time employee of the school district who is ordinarily available to accept nomination papers under [this section](#). On the final date for filing nomination papers the office of the school secretary shall remain open until 5:00 p.m.

2. a. Each candidate shall be nominated by petition. If the candidate is running for a seat in the district which is voted for at-large, the petition must be signed by the greater of at least ten eligible electors or a number of eligible electors equal in number to not less than one percent of the registered voters of the school district, which number need not be more than fifty. If the candidate is running for a seat which is voted for only by the voters of a

director district, the petition must be signed by the greater of at least ten eligible electors of the director district or a number of eligible electors equal in number to not less than one percent of the registered voters in the director district, which number need not be more than fifty.

b. Signers of nomination petitions shall include their addresses and the date of signing, and must reside in the same director district as the candidate if directors are elected by the voters of a director district, rather than at-large. A person may sign nomination petitions for more than one candidate for the same office, and the signature is not invalid solely because the person signed nomination petitions for one or more other candidates for the office. The petition shall be filed with the affidavit of the candidate being nominated, stating the candidate's name, place of residence, that such person is a candidate and is eligible for the office the candidate seeks, and that if elected the candidate will qualify for the office. The affidavit shall also state that the candidate is aware that the candidate is disqualified from holding office if the candidate has been convicted of a felony or other infamous crime and the candidate's rights have not been restored by the governor or by the president of the United States.

3. The secretary of the school board shall accept the petition for filing if on its face it appears to have the requisite number of signatures and if it is timely filed. The secretary of the school board shall note upon each petition and affidavit accepted for filing the date and time that the petition was filed. The secretary of the school board shall deliver all nomination petitions, together with the complete text of any public measure being submitted by the board to the electorate, to the county commissioner of elections on the day following the last day on which nomination petitions can be filed, and not later than 12:00 noon on that day.

4. Any person on whose behalf nomination petitions have been filed under [this section](#) may withdraw as a candidate by filing a signed statement to that effect with the secretary consistent with [section 44.9](#).

[S13, §2754; C24, §4201; C27, §4201, 4216-b4, -b5; C31, 35, §4216-c4; C39, **§4216.04**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.4]

[87 Acts, ch 221, §32; 88 Acts, ch 1119, §32; 89 Acts, ch 136, §63; 90 Acts, ch 1238, §35; 93 Acts, ch 143, §45; 94 Acts, ch 1180, §42; 95 Acts, ch 189, §19; 97 Acts, ch 170, §84; 98 Acts, ch 1052, §6; 2004 Acts, ch 1088, §1; 2010 Acts, ch 1033, §38; 2010 Acts, ch 1061, §180; 2017 Acts, ch 155, §38, 44; 2019 Acts, ch 148, §55; 2021 Acts, ch 147, §48, 54; 2024 Acts, ch 1146, §15](#)

Referred to in [§49.31, 275.25, 277.20, 279.6, 279.7](#)

277.5 Objections to nominations.

1. Objections to the legal sufficiency of a nomination petition or to the eligibility of a candidate may be filed by any person who would have the right to vote for a candidate for the office in question. The objection must be filed with the secretary of the school board at least forty-two days before the day of the school election. When objections are filed notice shall forthwith be given to the candidate affected, addressed to the candidate's place of residence as given on the candidate's affidavit, stating that objections have been made to the legal sufficiency of the petition or to the eligibility of the candidate, and also stating the time and place the objections will be considered.

2. Objections shall be considered not later than two working days following the receipt of the objections by the president of the school board, the secretary of the school board, and one additional member of the school board chosen by ballot. If objections have been filed to the nominations of either of those school officials, that official shall not pass on the objection. The official's place shall be filled by a member of the school board against whom no objection exists. The replacement shall be chosen by ballot.

[88 Acts, ch 1119, §33; 94 Acts, ch 1180, §43; 2017 Acts, ch 155, §39, 44; 2019 Acts, ch 24, §104](#)

Referred to in [§277.7](#)

277.6 Territory outside county. Repealed by 2017 Acts, ch 155, §43, 44.

277.7 Petitions for public measures.

1. A petition filed with the school board to request an election on a public measure shall

be examined before it is accepted for filing. If the petition appears valid on its face it shall be accepted for filing. If it lacks the required number of signatures it shall be returned to the petitioners.

2. Petitions which have been accepted for filing are valid unless written objections are filed. Objections must be filed with the secretary of the school board within five working days after the petition was filed. The objection process in [section 277.5](#) shall be followed for objections filed pursuant to [this section](#).

[94 Acts, ch 1180, §44; 2019 Acts, ch 24, §104](#)

277.8 through 277.19 Reserved.

277.20 Canvassing returns.

1. The canvass of returns shall be conducted pursuant to [section 50.24](#). Special elections held in school districts shall be canvassed at the time and in the manner required by [section 50.24](#). The appropriate board of supervisors shall declare the results of the voting for members of boards of directors of school corporations nominated pursuant to [section 277.4](#), and the commissioner of elections or controlling commissioner for the district shall at once issue a certificate of election to each person declared elected. The appropriate board shall also declare the results of the voting on any public question submitted to the voters of a single school district, and the commissioner or controlling commissioner shall certify the result as required by [section 50.27](#).

2. The abstracts of the votes cast for members of the board of directors of any merged area, and of the votes cast on any public question submitted to the voters of any merged area, shall be promptly certified by the county commissioner of elections to the merged area's controlling county commissioner under [section 47.2](#).

[C97, §2756; S13, §2756; C24, §4210; C27, §4210, 4211-b6; C31, 35, §4216-c20; C39, §4216.20; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.20]

[2017 Acts, ch 155, §40, 44; 2019 Acts, ch 24, §104](#)

Referred to in [§260C.15, 331.383](#)

277.21 Reserved.

277.22 Contested elections.

School elections may be contested as provided by law for the contesting of other elections.

[C24, 27, §4209; C31, 35, §4216-c22; C39, §4216.22; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.22]

Contesting elections, [chapter 57](#) et seq.

277.23 Directors — number — change.

1. In any district including all of a city of fifteen thousand or more population and in any district in which the voters, or the board as provided in [section 275.23A, subsection 2](#), have authorized seven directors, the board shall consist of seven members; in all other districts the board shall consist of five members.

2. A change from five to seven directors shall be effected in a district at the first regular election after authorization by the voters or the board, or after a district first includes all of a city of fifteen thousand or more population, in the manner described in [section 275.37](#).

[C51, §1112; R60, §2031, 2035, 2075; C73, §1720, 1721, 1808; C97, §2752, 2754; S13, §2752, 2754; C24, §4198, 4212; C27, §4198, 4211-b3, -b5; C31, 35, §4216-c23; C39, §4216.23; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.23]

[2002 Acts, ch 1024, §2, 3; 2002 Acts, ch 1134, §89, 115; 2003 Acts, ch 44, §57](#)

Referred to in [§275.23A, 275.25](#)

277.24 Reserved.

277.25 Directors in new districts.

At the first election in newly organized districts the directors shall be elected as follows:

1. In districts having three directors, two directors shall be elected for two years, and one for four years.

2. In districts having five directors, three shall be elected for two years, and two for four years.

3. In districts having seven directors, four shall be elected for two years, and three for four years.

[C73, §1802; C97, §2754; S13, §2754; C24, 27, §4199; C31, 35, §4216-c25; C39, §4216.25; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.25]

[2008 Acts, ch 1115, §19, 21](#)

277.26 Reserved.

277.27 Qualification.

A member of the board shall, at the time of election or appointment, be an eligible elector of the corporation or subdistrict. Notwithstanding any contrary provision of the Code, a member of the board of directors of a school district shall not receive compensation directly from the school board unless the compensation is for part-time or temporary employment and does not exceed the limitation set forth in [section 279.7A](#).

[C97, §2748; C24, 27, §4213; C31, 35, §4216-c27; C39, §4216.27; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.27]

[87 Acts, ch 224, §46; 88 Acts, ch 1038, §2; 2001 Acts, ch 53, §1](#)

277.28 Oath required.

1. Each director elected at a regular district or director district election shall qualify by taking the oath of office on or before the time set for the organization meeting of the board and the election and qualification entered of record by the secretary. The oath may be administered by any qualified member of the board or the secretary of the board and may be taken in substantially the following form:

Do you solemnly swear that you will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Iowa and that you will faithfully and impartially to the best of your ability discharge the duties of the office of (naming the office) in (naming the district) as now or hereafter required by law?

2. If the oath of office is taken elsewhere than in the presence of the board in session it may be administered by any officer listed in [sections 63A.1](#) and [63A.2](#) and shall be subscribed to by the person taking it in substantially the following form:

I,, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Iowa and that I will faithfully and impartially to the best of my ability discharge the duties of the office of (naming the office) in (naming the district) as now or hereafter required by law.

3. Such oath shall be properly verified by the administering officer and filed with the secretary of the board.

[C51, §1113, 1120; R60, §2032, 2079; C73, §1752, 1790; C97, §2758; S13, §2758; C24, 27, §4214; C31, 35, §4216-c28; C39, §4216.28; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.28]

[88 Acts, ch 1038, §3; 2010 Acts, ch 1061, §98](#)

Referred to in [§260C.15, 273.8, 279.3, 279.6, 279.7](#)

277.29 Vacancies.

Failure to elect at the proper election or to appoint within the time fixed by law or the failure of the officer elected or appointed to qualify within the time prescribed by law; the incumbent ceasing for any reason to be a resident of the district or removing residence from

the subdistrict; the resignation or death of incumbent or of the officer-elect; the removal of the incumbent from, or forfeiture of, the office, or the decision of a competent tribunal declaring the office vacant; the conviction of incumbent of a felony, as defined in [section 701.7](#), or of any public offense involving the violation of the incumbent's oath of office, shall constitute a vacancy.

[C31, 35, §4216-c29; C39, §**4216.29**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.29]
[86 Acts, ch 1112, §10](#); [86 Acts, ch 1238, §12](#)
 Referred to in [§260C.11, 273.8, 273.23](#)

277.30 Vacancies filled by election.

When vacancies are to be filled by election, the provisions of sections [279.6](#) and [279.7](#) shall control.

[C73, §1802; C97, §2754; S13, §2754; C24, 27, §4199; C31, 35, §4216-c30; C39, §**4216.30**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.30]
[2015 Acts, ch 140, §55, 58, 59](#)

277.31 Surrendering office.

Each school officer or member of the board upon the termination of the officer's or member's term of office shall immediately surrender to the successor all books, papers, and moneys pertaining or belonging to the office, taking a receipt therefor.

[R60, §2080; C73, §1791; C97, §2770; C24, 27, §4215; C31, 35, §4216-c31; C39, §**4216.31**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.31]
[2025 Acts, ch 30, §55](#)
 Section amended

277.32 Penalties.

Any school officer willfully violating any law relative to public or accredited nonpublic schools, or willfully failing or refusing to perform any duty imposed by law, shall forfeit and pay into the treasury of the particular school corporation in which the violation occurs the sum of twenty-five dollars, action to recover which shall be brought in the name of the proper school corporation, and be applied to the use of the schools therein.

[C51, §1137; R60, §2047, 2081; C73, §1746, 1786; C97, §2822; C24, 27, §4216; C31, 35, §4216-c32; C39, §**4216.32**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §277.32]
[2018 Acts, ch 1026, §95](#)