

CHAPTER 47
ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

Referred to in §39.3, 39A.1, 39A.2, 39A.4, 39A.6, 43.5, 260C.15, 260C.39, 275.35, 277.3, 296.4, 298.18, 331.505, 357J.16, 360.1, 372.2, 376.1

Chapter applicable to primary elections, §43.5
See also definitions in §39.3

47.1	State commissioner of elections.	47.8	Voter registration commission — composition — duties.
47.2	County commissioner of elections.	47.9	Voting machine reimbursement fund. Repealed by 2008 Acts, ch 1176, §8, 10.
47.3	Election expenses.	47.10	Optical scan voting system fund.
47.4	Election filing deadlines.	47.11	Electronic poll book and polling place technology program — revolving loan fund.
47.5	Purchasing by competitive bidding.		
47.6	Election dates — conflicts — public measures.		
47.7	State registrar of voters.		

47.1 State commissioner of elections.

1. The secretary of state is designated as the state commissioner of elections and shall supervise the activities of the county commissioners of elections. There is established within the office of the secretary of state a division of elections which shall be under the direction of the state commissioner of elections. The state commissioner of elections may appoint a person to be in charge of the division of elections who shall perform the duties assigned by the state commissioner of elections. The state commissioner of elections shall prescribe uniform election practices and procedures, shall prescribe the necessary forms required for the conduct of elections, shall assign a number to each proposed constitutional amendment and statewide public measure for identification purposes, and shall adopt rules, pursuant to [chapter 17A](#), to carry out [this section](#).

2. *a.* The state commissioner of elections may exercise emergency powers over any election being held in a district in which either a natural or other disaster or extremely inclement weather has occurred. The state commissioner’s decision to alter any conduct for an election using emergency powers must be approved by the legislative council. If the legislative council does not approve the secretary of state’s use of emergency powers to conduct an election, the legislative council may choose to present and approve its own election procedures or choose to take no further action. The state commissioner of elections may also exercise emergency powers during an armed conflict involving United States armed forces, or mobilization of those forces, or if an election contest court finds that there were errors in the conduct of an election making it impossible to determine the result.

b. If an emergency exists in all precincts of a county, the number of polling places shall not be reduced by more than thirty-five percent. The polling places allowed to open shall be equitably distributed in the county based on the ratio of regular polling places located in unincorporated areas in the county to regular polling places in incorporated areas in the county.

3. The secretary of state is designated the chief state election official and is responsible for coordination of state responsibilities under the federal National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

4. The state commissioner shall adopt rules describing the emergency powers and the situations in which the powers will be exercised.

5. The state commissioner shall adopt rules pursuant to [chapter 17A](#), for the implementation of uniform and nondiscriminatory administrative complaint procedures for resolution of grievances relating to violations of Tit. III of Pub. L. No. 107-252. In complaint proceedings in which all of the respondents are local election officials, the presiding officer shall be the state commissioner of elections. In complaint proceedings in which one of the respondents is the state commissioner of elections, the presiding officer shall be a panel consisting of all members of the state voter registration commission appointed pursuant to [section 47.8](#), except the state commissioner of elections or the state commissioner’s designee.

6. The state commissioner may, at the state commissioner's discretion, examine the records of a commissioner to evaluate complaints and to ensure compliance with the provisions of [chapters 39 through 53](#). This examination shall include assessments conducted or authorized by private or government entities to evaluate a county's security readiness for elections-related technology or physical facilities. The state commissioner shall adopt rules pursuant to [chapter 17A](#) to require a commissioner to provide written explanations related to examinations conducted pursuant to [this subsection](#). Any information that is requested by or in the possession of the state commissioner pursuant to [this chapter](#) shall not lose its confidential status pursuant to [section 22.7, subsection 50](#).

7. The state commissioner may share information a county provides to an appropriate government agency to safeguard against cybersecurity or physical threats.

8. The state commissioner may adopt rules pursuant to [chapter 17A](#) to create minimum security protocols applicable to county commissioners of elections. If a county fails to adhere to these protocols, the state commissioner may limit access to the statewide voter registration system.

[C71, §49A.6; C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §47.1; 81 Acts, ch 34, §8]

91 Acts, ch 129, §10; 93 Acts, ch 143, §9; 94 Acts, ch 1169, §45; 2004 Acts, ch 1083, §3, 37; 2010 Acts, ch 1061, §180; 2017 Acts, ch 110, §40; 2019 Acts, ch 148, §19, 20, 33; 2020 Acts, ch 1098, §3

Referred to in §39.3, 42.1, 47.8
Subsection 2 amended

47.2 County commissioner of elections.

1. The county auditor of each county is designated as the county commissioner of elections in each county. The county commissioner of elections shall conduct voter registration pursuant to [chapter 48A](#) and conduct all elections within the county.

2. *a.* When an election is to be held as required by law or is called by a political subdivision of the state and the political subdivision is located in more than one county, the county commissioner of elections of each of those counties shall conduct that election within the commissioner's county. However, the commissioner for the county having the greatest taxable base within the political subdivision shall serve as the controlling commissioner for the election. The controlling commissioner shall receive all nomination papers and public measures for the political subdivision. By the forty-first day prior to the election, the controlling commissioner shall certify the names of candidates and the text and summary of any public measure being submitted to the electorate to all county commissioners of elections required to conduct elections for the political subdivision. The county commissioners of elections of the other counties in which the political subdivision is located shall cooperate with the controlling commissioner.

b. Notwithstanding paragraph "a", for a city primary election, city runoff election, or a special election for a city, school district, or merged area, if a political subdivision is located in more than one county, the county commissioner of elections of a county not having the greatest taxable base within the political subdivision may designate that the controlling commissioner of the political subdivision shall conduct that election if fewer than one hundred twenty-five registered voters of the political subdivision are located within such county commissioner's county. If the controlling commissioner is so designated, [section 50.24, subsections 4 and 5](#), shall not apply. For the purposes of this paragraph, the number of registered voters shall be the number of registered voters in the political subdivision of a county not having the greatest taxable base on May 1 immediately preceding the first day of the filing period for candidates for the election. If May 1 falls on a day when the county commissioner's office is closed for business, the county commissioner shall use the number of registered voters on the next day that the county commissioner's office is open for business to determine the number of registered voters.

3. The commissioner may designate as a deputy county commissioner of elections any officer of a political subdivision who is required by law to accept nomination papers filed by candidates for office in that political subdivision, and when so designated that person shall assist the commissioner in administering elections conducted by the commissioner for that

subdivision. The designation of a person as a deputy commissioner of elections pursuant to [this section](#), once made, shall continue in effect until the designation is withdrawn by the commissioner.

4. The commissioner shall assign each local public measure a letter for identification purposes. The public measure on the ballot shall be identified by the letter.

a. The county commissioner who is responsible under [subsection 2](#) for conducting the elections held for a political subdivision which lies in more than one county shall assign the letter to the public measure.

b. The county commissioners of elections of the other counties in which the political subdivision is located shall not assign the same letter to a local public measure on the ballot in their counties during the same election.

5. The office of county auditor or county commissioner of elections in each county shall be open for at least eight hours on the Saturday preceding a general election, primary election, or special election called by the governor for the purpose of receiving absentee ballots and conducting other official business relating to the election.

6. On the final date for filing nomination papers in the commissioner's office the office shall be open until the time for receiving nomination papers has passed.

7. The county commissioner of elections shall, to maintain election security, do all of the following:

a. When the county commissioner believes that a cybersecurity incident or data breach has occurred, the county commissioner shall immediately inform the state commissioner of elections.

b. If the county commissioner has no reason to believe that a cybersecurity incident or data breach has occurred, the county commissioner shall certify that fact to the state commissioner on an annual basis.

8. The county commissioner shall not participate in an absentee ballot drive or collection effort in cooperation with a candidate, candidate's committee, political party, or nonparty political organization. However, when a county commissioner is a candidate for election, such a county commissioner may participate in an absentee ballot drive or collection effort, but shall not aid any other candidate, candidate's committee, political party, or nonparty political organization.

[C73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §47.2; 81 Acts, ch 34, §9]

[84 Acts, ch 1291, §3](#); [89 Acts, ch 136, §31](#); [94 Acts, ch 1169, §46](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1032, §201](#); [2017 Acts, ch 155, §15, 44](#); [2019 Acts, ch 148, §21, 33, 38, 39](#)

Referred to in [§39.3, 44.4, 48A.2, 50.11, 50.24, 52.25, 68A.102, 260C.15, 260C.22, 260C.28, 277.20, 331.661, 331.753, 376.4, 376.6, 376.7, 376.9](#)

47.3 Election expenses.

1. The costs of conducting a special election called by the governor, general election, and the primary election held prior to the general election shall be paid by the county.

2. The cost of conducting other elections shall be paid by the political subdivision for which the election is held. The costs shall include but not be limited to the printing of the ballots and the election register, publication of notices, printing of declaration of eligibility affidavits, compensation for precinct election boards, canvass materials, and the preparation and installation of voting equipment. The county commissioner of elections shall certify to the county board of supervisors a statement of cost for an election. The cost shall be assessed by the county board of supervisors against the political subdivision for which the election was held.

3. a. Costs of registration and administrative and clerical costs shall not be charged as a part of the election costs.

b. If automatic tabulating equipment is used in any election, the county commissioner of elections shall not charge any political subdivision of the state a rental fee for the use of any automatic tabulating equipment.

4. The cost of maintenance of voter registration records and of preparation of election registers and any other voter registration lists required by the commissioner in the discharge

of the duties of that office shall be paid by the county. Administrative and clerical costs incurred by the registrar in discharging the duties of that office shall be paid by the state.

[C97, §1129; S13, §1129, 2754; SS15, §1087-a5; C24, §560, 835, 4203; C27, §560, 718-b18, 4203; C31, 35, §560, 718-b18, 4216-c15; C39, §560, 718.18, 4216.15; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, §43.32, 48.18, 49.118, 277.15; C73, §43.32, 47.3, 277.15; C75, 77, 79, 81, §47.3]

[2009 Acts, ch 57, §12](#)

Referred to in [§275.26](#), [331.383](#)

Compensation of precinct election board members, see [§49.20](#)

47.4 Election filing deadlines.

If the deadline for a filing pertaining to an election falls on a day that the state or county commissioner's office is closed for business, the deadline shall be extended to the next day that the office of state commissioner or county commissioner is open for business to receive the filing. [This section](#) does not apply to the deadline for voter registration under [section 48A.9, subsection 2](#).

[97 Acts, ch 170, §10](#)

47.5 Purchasing by competitive bidding.

1. Except for legal services and printing of ballots, the commissioner shall take bids for goods and services which are needed in connection with registration of voters or preparation for or administration of elections and which will be performed or provided by persons who are not employees of the commissioner under the following circumstances:

a. In any case where it is proposed to purchase data processing services. The commissioner shall give the registrar written notice in advance on each occasion when it is proposed to have data processing services, necessary in connection with the administration of elections, performed by any person other than the registrar or an employee of the county. Such notice shall be made at least thirty days prior to publication of the specifications.

b. In all other cases, where the cost of the goods or services to be purchased will exceed one thousand dollars.

2. When it is proposed to purchase any goods or services, other than data processing services, in connection with administration of elections, the commissioner shall publish notice to bidders, including specifications regarding the goods or services to be purchased or a description of the nature and object of the services to be retained, in a newspaper of general circulation in the county not less than fifteen days before the final date for submission of bids. When competitive bidding procedures are used, the purchase of goods or services shall be made from the lowest responsible bidder which meets the specifications or description of the services needed or the commissioner may reject all bids and readvertise. In determining the lowest responsible bidder, various factors may be considered, including but not limited to the past performance of the bidder relative to quality of product or service, the past experience of the purchaser in relation to the product or service, the relative quality of products or services, the proposed terms of delivery and the best interest of the county.

3. The procedure for purchasing data processing services in connection with administration of elections is the same as prescribed in [subsection 2](#), except that the required copy of the bid specifications shall be filed with the registrar rather than the state commissioner. The specifications for data processing contracts relative to voter registration records shall be specified by the registration commission. The registrar shall, not later than the final date for submission of bids, inform the commissioner in writing whether the department of administrative services data processing facilities are currently capable of furnishing the services the county proposes to purchase, and if so the cost to the county of so obtaining the services as determined in accordance with the standard charges adopted by the registration commission. The commissioner, with approval of the board of supervisors, may reject all bids and enter into an arrangement with the registrar for the services to be furnished by the state. The commissioner may recommend and the board of supervisors may approve purchasing the needed services from the lowest responsible bidder; however, if the needed services could be obtained through the registrar at a lower cost, the board shall publish notice twice in a newspaper of general circulation in the county of its intent to

accept such bid and of the difference in the amount of the bid and the cost of purchasing the needed services from the department of administrative services data processing facilities through the registrar. Each contract for the furnishing of data processing services necessary in connection with the administration of elections, by any person other than the registrar or an employee of the county, shall be executed with the contractor by the board of supervisors of the county purchasing the services, but only after the contract has been reviewed and approved by the registration commission. The contract shall be of not more than one year's duration. Each county exercising the option to purchase such data processing services from a provider other than the registrar shall provide the registrar, at the county's expense, original and updated voter registration lists in a form and at times prescribed by rules adopted by the registration commission.

4. Any election or registration data or records which may be in the possession of a contractor shall remain the property of the commissioner. Contracts with a private person relating to the maintenance and use of voter registration data, which were properly entered into in compliance with [this section](#) and with all other laws relating to bidding on such contracts, shall remain in force only until the most recently negotiated termination date of that contract. A new contract with the same provider may be entered into in accordance with [subsection 3](#).

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §47.5]

[86 Acts, ch 1245, §312](#); [95 Acts, ch 103, §1, 2](#); [97 Acts, ch 170, §11, 12](#); [2003 Acts, ch 145, §286](#)

47.6 Election dates — conflicts — public measures.

1. a. (1) The governing body of a political subdivision which has authorized a special election to which [section 39.2, subsections 1, 2, and 3](#), are applicable shall by written notice inform the commissioner who will be responsible for conducting the election of the proposed date of the special election.

(a) If a public measure will appear on the ballot at the special election, the governing body shall submit the complete text of the public measure to the commissioner with the notice of the proposed date of the special election.

(b) If the proposed date of the special election coincides with the date of a regularly scheduled election or previously scheduled special election, the notice shall be given no later than 5:00 p.m. on the last day on which nomination papers may be filed with the commissioner for the regularly scheduled election or previously scheduled special election, but in no case shall notice be less than thirty-two days before the election. Otherwise, the notice shall be given at least forty-six days in advance of the date of the proposed special election.

(2) Upon receiving the notice, the commissioner shall promptly give written approval of the proposed date unless it appears that the special election, if held on that date, would conflict with a regular election or with another special election previously scheduled for that date.

b. A public measure shall not be withdrawn from the ballot at any election if the public measure was placed on the ballot by a petition, or if the election is a special election called specifically for the purpose of deciding one or more public measures for a single political subdivision. However, a public measure which was submitted to the county commissioner of elections by the governing body of a political subdivision may be withdrawn by the governing body which submitted the public measure if the public measure was to be placed on the ballot of a regularly scheduled election. The notice of withdrawal must be made by resolution of the governing body and must be filed with the commissioner no later than the last day upon which a candidate may withdraw from the ballot.

2. For the purpose of [this section](#), a conflict between two elections exists only when some but not all of the registered voters of any precinct would be entitled to vote in one of the elections and all of the registered voters of the same precinct would be entitled to vote in the other election. Nothing in [this subsection](#) shall deny a commissioner discretionary authority to approve holding a special election on the same date as another election, even though the

two elections may be defined as being in conflict, if the commissioner concludes that to do so will cause no undue difficulties.

3. a. A city council, county board of supervisors, school district board of directors, or merged area board of directors that has authorized a public measure to be submitted to the voters at a special election held pursuant to [section 39.2, subsection 4](#), shall file the full text of the public measure with the commissioner no later than 5:00 p.m. on the forty-sixth day before the election.

b. If there are vacancies in county offices to be filled at the special election, candidates shall file their nomination papers with the commissioner not later than 5:00 p.m. on the forty-sixth day before the election.

c. If there are vacancies in city offices to be filled at the special election, candidates shall file their nomination papers with the city clerk not later than 5:00 p.m. on the forty-seventh day before the election. The city clerk shall deliver the nomination papers to the commissioner not later than 5:00 p.m. on the forty-sixth day before the election. Candidates for city offices in cities in which a primary election may be necessary shall file their nomination papers with the city clerk not later than 5:00 p.m. on the fifty-fourth day before the election. The city clerk shall deliver the nomination papers to the commissioner not later than 5:00 p.m. on the fifty-third day before the election.

[C77, 79, 81, §47.6]

[89 Acts, ch 136, §32](#); [90 Acts, ch 1238, §12](#); [93 Acts, ch 143, §10](#); [95 Acts, ch 67, §53](#); [97 Acts, ch 170, §13](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1032, §145](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1115, §25, 26, 71](#); [2009 Acts, ch 57, §13](#); [2010 Acts, ch 1033, §12, 56](#); [2017 Acts, ch 155, §16, 44](#)

Referred to in [§39.2, 275.25, 372.9](#)

47.7 State registrar of voters.

1. The state commissioner of elections is designated the state registrar of voters, and shall regulate the preparation, preservation, and maintenance of voter registration records, the preparation of precinct election registers for all elections administered by the commissioner of any county, and the preparation of other data on voter registration and participation in elections which is requested and purchased at actual cost of preparation and production by a political party or any resident of this state. The registrar shall maintain a log, which is a public record, showing all lists and reports which have been requested or generated or which are capable of being generated by existing programs of the data processing services of the registrar. In the execution of the duties provided by [this chapter](#), the state registrar of voters shall provide the maximum public access to the electoral process permitted by law.

2. a. On or before January 1, 2006, the state registrar of voters shall implement in a uniform and nondiscriminatory manner, a single, uniform, official, centralized, interactive computerized statewide voter registration file defined, maintained, and administered at the state level that contains the name and registration information of every legally registered voter in the state and assigns a unique identifier to each legally registered voter in the state. The state voter registration system shall be coordinated with other agency databases within the state, including, but not limited to, state department of transportation driver's license records, judicial records of convicted felons and persons declared incompetent to vote, and Iowa department of public health records of deceased persons.

b. On or after January 1, 2007, a county shall not establish or maintain a voter registration system separate from the state voter registration system. Each county shall provide to the state registrar the names, voter registration information, and voting history of each registered voter in the county in the form required by the state registrar.

c. A state or local election official may obtain immediate electronic access to the information contained in the computerized voter registration file. All voter registration information obtained by a local election official shall be electronically entered into the computerized voter registration file on an expedited basis at the time the information is provided to the local election official. The state registrar shall provide such support as may be required to enable local election officials to electronically enter the information into the computerized voter registration file on an expedited basis. The list generated from

the computerized file shall serve as the official voter registration list for the conduct of all elections for federal office in the state.

d. The state registrar shall prescribe by rule the procedures for access to the state voter registration file, including all of the following:

(1) Access protocols for adding, changing, or deleting information from the state voter registration file.

(2) Training requirements for all state voter registration file users.

(3) Technology safeguards, including county information technology network requirements, necessary to access the state voter registration file.

(4) Breach incident response requirements and protocols on all matters related to elections.

e. The state registrar may rescind access to the statewide voter registration file from a user who is not in compliance with the prescribed rules.

[C77, 79, 81, §47.7; 81 Acts, ch 34, §10]

83 Acts, ch 176, §1, 10; 86 Acts, ch 1245, §313; 94 Acts, ch 1169, §47; 98 Acts, ch 1217, §34; 2004 Acts, ch 1083, §4, 37; 2006 Acts, ch 1003, §1, 2; 2019 Acts, ch 148, §22, 23, 33

Referred to in §39.3, 48A.10A, 53.2, 53.10

47.8 Voter registration commission — composition — duties.

1. A state voter registration commission is established which shall meet at least quarterly to make and review policy, adopt rules, and establish procedures to be followed by the registrar in discharging the duties of that office, and to promote interagency cooperation and planning.

a. The commission shall consist of the state commissioner of elections or the state commissioner's designee, the state chairpersons of the two political parties whose candidates for president of the United States or governor, as the case may be, received the greatest and next greatest number of votes in the most recent general election, or their respective designees, and a county commissioner of registration appointed by the president of the Iowa state association of county auditors, or an employee of the commissioner.

b. The commission membership shall be balanced by political party affiliation pursuant to [section 69.16](#). Members shall serve without additional salary or reimbursement.

c. The state commissioner of elections, or the state commissioner's designee, shall serve as chairperson of the state voter registration commission.

2. The registration commission shall prescribe the forms required for voter registration by rules promulgated pursuant to [chapter 17A](#).

3. a. The registrar shall provide staff services to the commission and shall make available to it all information relative to the activities of the registrar's office in connection with voter registration policy which may be requested by any commission member. The registrar shall also provide to the commission at no charge statistical reports for planning and analyzing voter registration services in the state.

b. The commission may authorize the registrar to employ such additional staff personnel as it deems necessary to permit the duties of the registrar's office to be adequately and promptly discharged. Such personnel shall be employed pursuant to [chapter 8A, subchapter IV](#).

4. The registration commission shall annually adopt a set of standard charges to be made for the services the registrar is required to offer to the several commissioners, and for furnishing of voter registration records which are requested by persons other than the registrar, the state commissioner or any commissioner pursuant to [section 48A.38](#). These charges shall be sufficient to reimburse the state for the actual cost of furnishing such services or information, and shall be specified by unit wherever possible. The standard charges shall be adopted by the commission by January 15 of each calendar year.

5. In complaint proceedings held pursuant to [section 47.1](#) in which one of the respondents is the state commissioner of elections, the presiding officer shall be a panel consisting of

all members of the state voter registration commission, except the state commissioner of elections or the state commissioner's designee.

[C77, 79, 81, §47.8]

93 Acts, ch 143, §11; 94 Acts, ch 1169, §48; 95 Acts, ch 189, §6, 7; 2003 Acts, ch 145, §152; 2004 Acts, ch 1083, §5, 37; 2008 Acts, ch 1032, §146

Referred to in §39.3, 47.1

47.9 Voting machine reimbursement fund. Repealed by 2008 Acts, ch 1176, §8, 10.

47.10 Optical scan voting system fund.

An optical scan voting system fund is established in the office of the treasurer of state under the control of the secretary of state. Moneys in the fund are appropriated to the office of the secretary of state for purchase and distribution of optical scan voting system equipment to counties to assist county compliance with [section 52.2](#). The secretary of state, in consultation with the department of administrative services, shall establish a procedure for purchasing and distributing the equipment.

2008 Acts, ch 1176, §1, 10; 2011 Acts, ch 34, §168

47.11 Electronic poll book and polling place technology program — revolving loan fund.

1. An electronic poll book and polling place technology program is created and an electronic poll book and polling place technology revolving loan fund is created in the state treasury under the control of the state commissioner. The program and revolving loan fund shall be administered by the state commissioner and the revolving loan fund shall include moneys allocated from the state commissioner's budget and any other moneys obtained or accepted by the state commissioner for deposit in the revolving loan fund.

2. *a.* The state commissioner may loan moneys in the revolving loan fund to county commissioners for the purchase or update of electronic poll book and polling place technology.

b. Moneys loaned under [this subsection](#) shall be used, in accordance with [section 49.28](#), to furnish electronic poll books to election precincts for the purpose of modernizing polling places throughout the state.

c. The state commissioner may spend an amount not to exceed thirty percent of the moneys in the revolving loan fund at the beginning of a fiscal year to administer polling place technology to ensure compliance with state standards of technological security and the protection of personally identifiable information.

3. A loan made under [this section](#) shall bear no interest.

4. Notwithstanding [section 12C.7, subsection 2](#), interest or earnings on moneys in the revolving loan fund shall be credited to the revolving loan fund. Notwithstanding [section 8.33](#), moneys in the revolving loan fund that remain unencumbered or unobligated at the close of a fiscal year shall not revert to any other fund but shall remain available in the revolving loan fund for the purposes designated.

5. The state commissioner shall adopt rules pursuant to [chapter 17A](#) to administer [this section](#).

2017 Acts, ch 110, §37