
**State Government & Tribal Relations
Committee**

HB 1291

Brief Description: Concerning state reimbursement of election costs.

Sponsors: Representatives Walsh, Dolan, Goehner, Gregerson, Van Werven, Eslick, Bergquist, Pollet and Rude.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the state to reimburse the prorated share of state elections costs to counties for primary and general elections in even-numbered years;
- Requires the state to reimburse the prorated share of federal elections costs to counties for all primary and general elections.
- Requires the state to reimburse the costs of mandatory recounts for certain offices.

Hearing Date: 1/25/19

Staff: Desiree Omli (786-7105).

Background:

The state must pay a prorated share of the cost of any primary or general election in odd-numbered years when state officers or measures are on the ballot. The state must also pay a prorated share of costs associated with elections held to fill a vacancy in the United States Senate or House of Representatives.

The county auditor apportions the state's share of election costs and files for reimbursement with the Secretary of State (Secretary). The Secretary must include in the biennial budget request sufficient funds to cover the prorated share of election costs, and appropriations must be made specifically for reimbursement for election costs. The Secretary is required to pay interest for any period of time in excess of 30 days after the receipt of a reimbursement voucher and entry of an allotment from specifically appropriated funds.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

For recounts, the canvassing board determines the cost of conducting a recount of votes. The cost of a recount is deducted from the amount deposited by the applicant for the recount, except when the recount changes the result of the nomination or election for which the recount was ordered. The cost for a mandatory recount cannot be charged to any candidate. The state is required to pay the costs of mandatory recounts for statewide measures.

Summary of Bill:

The state must reimburse counties for the prorated share of:

- state elections costs for primary and general elections held in even-numbered years; and
- federal elections costs for all primary and general elections.

The provision requiring that the state pay interest is removed. Rather, the state is required to pay reimbursement costs within 30 days after the receipt of a properly executed and documented voucher for reimbursement, until the funds appropriated for reimbursement are exhausted. If the funds appropriated for reimbursement are insufficient, the Secretary must include a budget request to the Legislature during the next legislative session for reimbursement of all remaining claims. The Secretary must reimburse the county within 30 days of allotment of specifically appropriated funds.

For recounts, the process for deducting the cost of a recount from amounts deposited by the applicant for the recount is clarified to apply to permissive recounts only. For mandatory recounts, the county auditor must file an expense claim with the Secretary for the following offices:

- an office where the candidates filed the declaration of candidacy with the Secretary;
- any legislative office, and
- any congressional office.

For the mandatory recounts, the Secretary must include a budget request to the Legislature during the next legislative session for sufficient funds to reimburse all the costs of the recounts. The Secretary must reimburse the costs within 30 days of allotment of specifically appropriated funds.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2020.