SSB 5013

Brief Description: Concerning local redistricting deadlines.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on State Government & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Hunt, Kuderer and Wilson, C.).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Modifies the deadline by when certain political subdivisions using district-based systems to elect their governing bodies are required to prepare its redistricting plan from eight months after the receipt of census data, to the earlier of eight months after the receipt of census data or November 15 of each year ending in one.

Hearing Date: 3/11/21

Staff: Desiree Omli (786-7105).

Background:

Elections by District.
Local jurisdictions conduct elections in a variety of ways for local boards, commissions, and other multi-member bodies. Some common voting methods include at-large, district-based, and hybrid election systems. In an at-large election, candidates are elected from voters of the entire jurisdiction. In a district-based election, the jurisdiction is divided into separate districts and each candidate is elected by the voters of a district in which the candidate resides. A hybrid system has elements of both at-large and district-based election systems. For example, a primary may be district-based, with candidates facing off in an at-large general election. Certain counties, cities, and special purpose districts use such a hybrid system for electing the governing

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body of the jurisdiction. Eight first-class cities, two second-class cities, and 17 optional municipal-code cities use some form of district-based elections to elect council members. The 32 noncharter counties in the state, which are counties that have not adopted a "home rule" charter to provide for their own form of government, are required to use the hybrid system for electing its commissioners. Counties adopting home rule charters may adopt different systems for electing their commissioners.

With exceptions, the Voting Rights Act authorizes counties, cities, towns, school districts, fire protection districts, port districts, and public utility districts to change its electoral system to implement a district-based election system if at-large voting would impair the ability of members of a protected class or classes to have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.

Redistricting.
Under the direction of the state Constitution, in January of each year ending in one, the state Redistricting Commission (Commission) is established to provide for the redistricting of state legislative and congressional districts. The Commission must complete redistricting as soon as possible following the federal decennial census, but no later than November 15 of each year ending in one.

Each county, city, and special purpose district which elects all or part of its governing body using the district-based method must prepare a plan for redistricting after each decennial census. The Commission must forward census data to such local jurisdiction within 45 days of receipt from the Census Bureau. The local jurisdiction must then prepare a redistricting plan within eight months of receiving the data from the Commission.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Each county, city, and special purpose district which elects all or part of its governing body using the district-based method must submit its redistricting plan by the earlier of:
- eight months after receiving census data from the Redistricting Commission; or
- November 15 of each year ending in one.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.