



May 7, 2019

Members of the State Government Finance Conference Committee,

On behalf of our 833-member cities, thank you for the opportunity to submit comment and positions on various provisions in both the House and Senate bills. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information or with questions.

Election Equipment Grants

Article 1, page R5, section 6

The League appreciates the Senate position that provides \$13 million for election equipment grants. Using this funding in coordination with the full \$6.6 million made available by the federal government to the Office of the Secretary of State is critical to ensuring that the state's elections system and equipment can best serve the voters of Minnesota.

➤ *Ann Lindstrom, alindstrom@lmc.org, 651-281-1261*

Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Election Security Appropriations

Article 1, page R27, section 38

The League supports the House language and continues to advocate for the Office of the Secretary of State (OSS) to have access to the full HAVA funding appropriated by the federal government. City officials worked with many stakeholders convened by the OSS in determining the most effective and efficient way to spend the funding made available to the state. Elections administrators are ready and eager to partner with the OSS to strengthen and secure Minnesota's elections infrastructure.

➤ *Ann Lindstrom, alindstrom@lmc.org, 651-281-1261*

Legislative Water Commission

Article 2, page R3, section 3

The League supports the House language extending the Legislative Water Commission to July 1, 2025.

➤ *Craig Johnson, cjohnson@lmc.org, 651-281-1259*

Website Accessibility Grants and Advisory Council

Article 2, page R17, section 17/Line 80 of Change Item Spreadsheet

The League appreciates the House position that provides \$200,000 over the next biennium for a website accessibility grant program to improve accessibility of local government websites for persons with disabilities.

➤ *Irene Kao, ikao@lmc.org, 651-281-1260*

Local Government Compensation Cap

Article 2, page R43, section 79, and page R50, section 89

The League supports the House position on the repeal of the local government compensation cap. The compensation cap has been in place since 1983 and is the only such cap we can identify in the country. Although it was modified in 2005 to increase and then annually adjust the cap for inflation, a growing number of local government positions are being impacted. Last year, 41 waiver requests were submitted. City mayors and councilmembers are elected to manage their cities and this cap replaces city council decisions with the judgement of a state agency.

➤ *Gary Carlson, gcarlson@lmc.org, 651-281-1255*

Elections Provisions

Article 4, page R11

The League has several policies in support of the following elections provisions included in the House language.

➤ *Ann Lindstrom, alindstrom@lmc.org, 651-281-1261*

Restoration of Voting Rights

The League opposes the loss of voting rights for those convicted of a felony who serve the entirety of their sentence in the community and are not incarcerated. If incarcerated, the League supports the restoration of voting rights to those convicted of a felony once they have completed their term of incarceration. This language in the bill will eliminate the administrative burden of challenging voters at the polls and determining eligibility from various jurisdictions. This will also eliminate the need for investigation by local law enforcement of those who have unknowingly registered to vote or voted before their rights were restored.

Early Voting

For those who vote in-person absentee prior to the seven days before Election Day, there is confusion and, in some cases, frustration that they are not allowed to place their ballots directly into a tabulator. To improve the voter experience and respond to the voter demand to vote early, we support this language increasing the time period that voters can place their ballots directly into the tabulator and creating a true early voting system.

Presidential Nomination Primary

Those who choose to participate in the presidential nomination primary will choose one ballot representing one major party. Currently, state statute requires that this party declaration be included in the public information list which can be accessed by any registered voter in Minnesota. Though the primary is a not an election but instead, a political party activity that the state has chosen to administer, it is anticipated that participants will be very concerned that their party affiliation information will be accessible by anyone. Making party choice information available only to the political parties is a critical change that needs to be made to state law this legislative session.

In-Person Absentee Voting Location Hours

The League does not have a specific policy regarding absentee voting location hours but our members have expressed concerns about staffing polling locations for the full 46 days. Elections administrators are wholly invested in making the voting experience as positive as possible and also want to do so efficiently as possible. In some areas of the state, it may not be the best option for absentee balloting locations to be open for the entire duration but instead develop hours that are more appropriate for the community.

Mail Balloting

Minn. Stat. § 204B.45 authorizes all non-metropolitan townships and cities with less than 400 registered voters located outside of the seven-county metropolitan area to hold elections by mail. A city may conduct mail balloting for an individual precinct having fewer than 100 registered voters, subject to the approval of the county auditor. Staffing and equipment needs can be very costly and mail balloting is an efficient way of conducting an election for cities that have lower numbers of registered voters regardless of location in or outside the metro area. The League supports lifting the arbitrary prohibition of mail balloting for jurisdictions within the metro.

Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV)

The League of Minnesota Cities does not have a policy in support of RCV but does support legislation that would give statutory cities the same authority given to charter cities to consider and adopt RCV. The League also supports statewide standards for those cities that choose to adopt RCV to ensure it is implemented consistently throughout the state to give voters confidence in the fairness of the alternative process of casting their ballots and in the outcome of such elections.