

Subject Elections and Campaign Finance Appropriations Bill

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Overview

This bill is the elections and campaign finance supplemental appropriations bill.

Article 1: Appropriations and Transfers

Section Description – Article 1: Appropriations and Transfers

- 1 Secretary of state (2021 appropriation).**

Amends the 2021 session law providing appropriations to the secretary of state to specify that amounts designated for transfer to the voting equipment grant account are onetime transfers, and that amounts designed for grants to local governments related to absentee ballot drop boxes are also onetime amounts. The total amounts appropriated in that bill remain unchanged.
- 2 Secretary of state (2023 appropriation).**

Amends the 2023 session law providing appropriations to the secretary of state to designate new amounts for ongoing transfer to the voting operations, technology, and election resources (VOTER) account, which was established by the same bill. These amounts will become part of the secretary's base appropriation, and include a reallocation of amounts previously appropriated to the voting equipment grant account and for grants to local governments for absentee ballot drop boxes, as well as new amounts. The VOTER account is used to provide grants to local governments for certain election expenses.
- 3 Transfer; voting operations, technology, and election resources account.**

Amends the 2023 session law that transferred certain amounts to the VOTER account each year, to provide a reduced amount of the transfer, that it is onetime, and from the voting equipment grant account. These changes correspond with the change in section 2 of this article.

Section Description – Article 1: Appropriations and Transfers

- 4 **Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board; appropriation.**
Appropriates money from the general fund to the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, for costs associated with implementing the local election reporting requirements established in article 3 of the bill.
- 5 **Voting Rights Act cost sharing account; Transfer.**
Transfers money from the general fund to the Voting Rights Act cost sharing account. Policy describing the use of this account is contained later in the bill.

Article 2: Elections Policy

Section Description – Article 2: Elections Policy

- 1 **Voting Rights Act cost sharing account.**
Establishes a Voting Rights Act cost sharing account in the special revenue fund. Money in the account is appropriated to the secretary of state, to provide reimbursements to political subdivisions for cost sharing expenses agreed to as a result of a presuit notice letter filed under the Minnesota Voting Rights Act (this section takes effect only if the Minnesota Voting Rights Act, currently traveling in another bill, is enacted into law).

Details regarding eligibility and the process for a political subdivision to request a reimbursement are provided.
- 2 **Application.**
Adds a cross-reference to ranked choice voting, to an existing law governing ballot preparation.
- 3 **Ranked choice voting election.**
Adds a cross-reference to ranked choice voting elections in an existing law governing the method of counting votes.
- 4 **Exception; certain nonpartisan candidate.**
Provides that candidates in a nonpartisan ranked choice voting election must be omitted from the state and county primary election ballot.
- 5 **Applicability; authorized local adoption only.**
Provides that the new chapter of statute enacted by this bill applies to all elections conducted using ranked choice voting, as authorized by law. All other provisions of law related to the conduct and administration of elections also apply to ranked

Section Description – Article 2: Elections Policy

choice voting elections, to the extent they are consistent with the provisions established in the bill.

6 Definitions.

Provides definitions for a number of terms that are used throughout the bill, related to ranked choice voting.

7 Authorization for local adoption.

Authorizes cities, school districts, and counties to adopt ranked choice voting as a method of voting for local offices, beginning January 1, 2025. The proposed author's amendment extends this authority to counties also.

Details regarding how ranked choice voting must be adopted within the jurisdiction are provided.

8 Ballots in local ranked choice voting elections.

Provides standards for ballot formatting, including a requirement that a ranked choice voting ballot permit a voter to rank at least three candidates for each office and provide for write-in candidates, that instructions be provided on the ballot, and that offices to be elected using ranked choice voting be clearly separated on the ballot from offices to be elected using another voting method.

The secretary of state is required to adopt rules for ranked choice voting ballot format. The rules may differ from the general laws that apply to ballot formatting.

9 Local ranked choice voting tabulation center.

Subd. 1. Tabulation of votes; generally. Requires one physical location be designated as the ranked choice voting tabulation center. The location must be accessible to the public for the purposes of observing the vote tabulation.

Subd. 2. Precinct tabulation. Requires the county auditor, municipal clerk, or school district clerk to deliver certain elections records to the ranked choice voting tabulation center as soon as possible after vote counting is completed and the election judges have returned the relevant materials.

Subd. 3. Notice of recess in count. At the ranked choice voting tabulation center, a recess in counting is permitted for meals or other necessary purposes. Notice of a recess must be posted; the content and locations for posting the notice are provided in the bill.

Subd. 4. Recording write-in votes. Establishes standards for processing and counting write-in votes.

Section Description – Article 2: Elections Policy

Subd. 5. Ranked choice vote tabulation. Requires tabulation of votes cast, at a time set by the chief elections official, on a continual basis until preliminary results are determined for all races (subject to the provisions allowing for a recess).

10 Tabulation of votes; single-seat local ranked choice voting elections.

Establishes mathematical and procedural standards for tabulating ranked choice votes and determining the result when there is a single seat to be elected. These standards include the establishment of a threshold vote total required for a candidate to be elected, procedures for transferring a candidate's surplus votes to other continuing candidates based on ranking, elimination of candidates with insufficient votes to continue, and procedures when a voter skips a ranking on the ballot.

11 Tabulation of votes; multiple-seat local ranked choice voting elections.

Establishes mathematical and procedural standards for tabulating ranked choice votes and determining the result, when there are multiple seats to be elected from among a single set of candidates on the ballot. These standards include the establishment of a threshold vote total required for a candidate to be elected, procedures for transferring a candidate's surplus votes to other continuing candidates based on ranking, elimination of candidates with insufficient votes to continue, and procedures when a voter skips a ranking on the ballot.

12 Local ranked choice voting elections; reporting results.

Establishes standards for the vote total summary statements required to be produced within each precinct and by the ranked choice voting local election official.

13 Local ranked choice election recounts.

Establishes standards for a recount of a ranked choice voting election. A candidate defeated in the final round of tabulation may request a recount under the standards and procedures provided in current law and rule. Any candidate, regardless of the time of their elimination or the vote difference, may request a recount at the candidate's own expense, also subject to administrative rules governing recounts.

14 Local ranked choice elections; postelection review.

Establishes standards and procedures for postelection review of an election that is conducted by ranked choice voting. A postelection review is used to determine whether the voting tabulation system accurately recorded the results. The standards and procedures detailed in this section include the number and selection of precincts to be reviewed, and the standard for acceptable performance of the voting system.

Section Description – Article 2: Elections Policy

- 15 **Rules; local option ranked choice voting.**
Authorizes the secretary of state to adopt rules to implement the ranked choice voting requirements and procedures established by this bill.
- 16 **Notice of filing dates.**
Requires the notice of candidate filing dates for a municipal election to include information on the method of voting to be used at the election.
- 17 **Required certification for ranked choice voting.**
Requires a voting system used for ranked choice voting to provide a test lab report from a voting system test lab accredited by the federal Election Assistance Commission or other appropriate federal agency. The test lab report must show that the system conforms to voluntary voting system guidelines issued by that agency.
- 18 **Electronic voting systems; purchasing.**
Establishes minimum standards and functionality for all electronic voting systems purchased in the state to administer ranked choice voting.
- 19 **Testing of voting systems.**
Requires voting systems to be tested for accuracy in recording votes at a ranked choice voting election, when the system will be used for that purpose.

Article 3: Campaign Finance Policy

Section Description – Article 3: Campaign Finance Policy

- 1 **Ballot question.**
Amends the definition of “ballot question” used by the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board by eliminating references that currently limit the board’s jurisdiction over local elections to only certain jurisdictions within Hennepin County.

Instead, the definition would broaden the board’s scope to include certain types of campaign expenditures for all county, city, school district, township, or special district ballot questions.
- 2 **Local candidate.**
Amends the definition of “local candidate” used by the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board by eliminating references that currently limit the board’s jurisdiction over local elections to only certain jurisdictions within Hennepin County. Instead, the definition would broaden the board’s scope to include oversight of

Section Description – Article 3: Campaign Finance Policy

- certain types of campaign expenditures related to all county, city, school district, township, or special district candidates.
- 3 Local election reports.**
Amends terminology related to certain local election campaign reports by political committees, political funds, or political party units to refer to the “July report” rather than the “pre-primary” report. The deadline for submission of this report remains unchanged.
- 4 Candidate.**
Eliminates a provision in chapter 211A, which regulates campaign finance reporting in local elections, that currently requires reporting by candidates for United States Senate and House of Representatives.
- 5 Committee.**
Establishes a new definition of the term “committee” for purposes of the local campaign finance reporting law. An existing definition of that term is repealed later in this bill.
- 6 Filing officer.**
Amends the definition of “filing officer” for purposes of the local campaign finance reporting law to eliminate a reference to an officer “authorized by law to place a ballot question on the ballot.”
- 7 Political purposes.**
Amends the definition of “political purposes” in the context of the local campaign finance reporting law, to limit its application to acts done to influence voting for a candidate at an election, rather than acts done to influence any type of voting at an election.
- 8 When and where filed by committees or candidates.**
Expands the existing reporting requirements for committees and candidates receiving contributions or making disbursements related to a local election. These reports must be submitted to the local filing officer.
- 9 Information required.**
Amends the content requirements of a local campaign finance report, to require, among other things, the total amount of contributions received and the total amount of disbursements to be reported separately, and that detail regarding a disbursement is only required if disbursements made to the same vendor exceed \$1000 in the

Section Description – Article 3: Campaign Finance Policy

- aggregate during the period covered by the report. Other conforming changes are also provided.
- 10 **Penalty.**
Amends existing penalties related to failure to file a required report, to eliminate penalties that apply to committees formed to promote or defeat a ballot question. These committees are instead subject to the jurisdiction of the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, as provided earlier in this bill.
- 11 **Failure to keep account; penalty.**
Extends certain accounting-related misdemeanor crimes to include the candidate, in addition to a treasurer or other individual who receives money on behalf of a committee.
- 12 **Bills when rendered and paid.**
Amends existing deadlines for payment to any person who provides materials or services so that the payment deadlines apply to both a candidate or, separately, to a committee (which may or may not be affiliated with a candidate).
- 13 **Contribution limits.**
Amends the section of law establishing contribution limits so that its terminology and structure more closely matches the law governing contribution limits for state candidates, including limits on contributions by associations, political committees, political funds, and political party units.
- 14 **Contributions and solicitations during legislative session.**
Amends the section of law prohibiting certain solicitations or contributions during a legislative session, to prohibit legislators or state constitutional officers who may be a candidate subject to the local campaign finance reporting laws from soliciting or accepting a contribution from political committees in addition to political funds, or from a lobbyist.
- 15 **Repealer.**
Repeals several subdivisions of law related to local campaign finance reporting requirements, to conform with other changes proposed by this bill. The repealers include elimination of definitions for the terms “ballot question” and “committee,” and a reporting requirement that applies to candidates for election to the United States House of Representatives and Senate.



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