

# House Research Act Summary

**CHAPTER:** 162

**SESSION:** 2016 Regular Session

**TOPIC:** Presidential Nomination Primary

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## Overview

This act establishes a presidential nomination primary for Minnesota. Minnesota last conducted a presidential nomination primary in 1992. The presidential nomination primary would be governed by the following general principles:

- **Presidential nomination primary date: first Tuesday in March, or on a date selected by the party chairs.** The default first primary scheduled under this bill would occur on March 3, 2020, but could be changed by mutual agreement of the party chairs.
- **Disclosure of party choice.** The political party for whom a voter voted in the presidential nomination primary would be recorded and become public information. A voter would be required to certify general agreement with the principles of the party for which the voter plans to vote.
- **Precinct caucuses would continue.** The primary would run in addition to precinct caucuses. The bill does not impact a party's right to hold a precinct caucus, or its right to determine what business is conducted at the caucus. The default caucus date in a presidential year would be one week prior to the presidential nomination primary.
- **Absentee voting would be permitted.** The absentee voting period for the presidential nomination primary would begin in mid-January of the primary year, if the primary is conducted on the first Tuesday in March.
- **The August state primary is not impacted.** Only candidates for president would appear on the ballot at the primary established by this bill. The state primary for other federal offices, and state and local offices, would continue to occur in August.

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- 1 **Public information lists.** Requires the publicly-available list of registered voters to include the party choice of a voter who voted in the most recent presidential nomination primary.
- 2 **Time and manner of holding; postponement.** Modifies requirements related to the scheduling of precinct caucuses by prohibiting caucuses from occurring on the date of a presidential nomination primary or town general election, and providing that the default caucus date in a presidential election year (if another date is not selected by agreement of the two largest major political parties) is one week prior to the presidential nomination primary.
- 3 **Preference ballot.** Eliminates the office of president from the precinct caucus preference ballot established in law.
- 4 **Separate precincts; combined polling place.** Modifies certain deadlines that apply to the formation of a combined polling place, to reflect the establishment of a presidential nomination primary.
- 5 **Boundary change procedure.** Provides a conforming reference to the law governing changes to precinct boundaries, to reflect the establishment of a presidential nomination primary.
- 6 **Elections covered.** Expands the current law that allows voters to take time off from work in order to cast a ballot to include the new presidential nomination primary established by this bill.
- 7 **Permanent registration; verification of registration.** Adds new text to the polling place roster used at a presidential nomination primary, requiring voters to certify their general agreement with the principles of the party for which they plan to vote, and that they understand that their party choice will be public information.
- 8 **Example ballot.** Provides a conforming reference to the current law requiring preparation of an example ballot by the secretary of state, to distinguish the presidential nomination primary example ballot with the example ballot for the state primary and state general elections.
- 9 **Presidential nomination primary established.** Establishes a presidential nomination primary to be held on the first Tuesday in March of a year in which the office of president is to be elected, or an alternate date mutually agreed-to by the major political parties. The secretary of state is required to adopt rules, in consultation with the chairs of each major political party.  
  
This bill does not change the date of the state primary or other federal and state candidates, which would continue to occur in August, as provided in current law.
- 10 **Conducting presidential nomination primary.** Establishes basic requirements for the conduct of the presidential nomination primary. With some exceptions, the presidential nomination primary would be administered similarly to state primary.  
  
The primary would provide separate ballots for each party, and the party's ballot selected by a voter would be recorded on the polling place roster. The primary results must bind each party's election of delegates.
- 11 **Form of ballots; candidates on ballot.** Provides standards for the format of the presidential nomination primary ballot. If requested by a party's chair, the ballot must be formatted to permit a voter to vote for uncommitted delegates, or for a write-in candidate.

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The candidates appearing on the ballot would be those submitted by the each party chair. The party chairs would determine whether votes for a write-in candidate are counted in the primary results.

**12**     **Notice of presidential nomination primary; sample ballots.** Provides standards to ensure proper public notice of the presidential nomination primary and distribution of sample ballots.

**13**     **Presidential nomination primary election expenses; local reimbursement.** Establishes a procedure for local governments to be reimbursed for their costs to administer the presidential nomination primary. An account is created for this purpose in the special revenue fund, and a statutory appropriation is provided.

Expenses qualifying for reimbursement are listed in subdivision 2. Requests for a reimbursement are only permitted for actual costs incurred, and would be due to the secretary of state within 60 days of a presidential nomination primary, with payments issued no later than 90 days after the primary. A proportional allocation of reimbursement funds would be required if the legislative appropriation is not sufficient to reimburse the total amount of payment requests.

**14**     **Base increase.** Increases the base appropriation in fiscal year 2019 to the secretary of state, for computer programming costs. This is a onetime increase.

**15**     **Effective date.** Provides that the bill is effective July 1, 2017. The first presidential nomination primary scheduled according to the terms of this bill would occur in 2020.