

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

**FILE NUMBER:** H.F. 159  
**Version:** As introduced

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**Authors:** Sviggum and others

**Subject:** Unicameral Legislature

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### Overview

The bill proposes an amendment to the state constitution that, if adopted by the people in 2000, would: (1) replace the House and Senate with a single legislative body, called the Senate, beginning in 2003; and (2) overlap, or stagger, the four-year senate term of office, so that one-half of the senators, as nearly as possible, would stand for election every two years. The bill also would amend the law that sets the number of legislators, replacing the current 201 legislators (67 senators and 134 representatives) with 135 senators.

- 1 **Constitutional amendment proposed.** Amends various provisions of the constitution, with three main substantive effects: (1) The legislature would consist of a single legislative body called the Senate, which would have the same legislative powers possessed by the current bicameral legislature. (2) The Senate would have the power to impeach (by majority vote of all members) as well as to convict (by a two-thirds vote of those present). (3) The senate term of office would remain four years, but senators' terms would overlap, so that one-half of the senators, as nearly as possible, would stand for election at each general election in the even-numbered years. Overlapping terms would be established in the first election of senators in 2002, when one-half of the senate districts, as nearly as possible, would elect senators to a short initial term of two-years. The districts that elect senators to a short term in that election would be determined by law. After each subsequent redistricting, the entire senate would not run at once for election from the new districts, as it does now. Instead, senators would serve out the balance of their term of office; and, where necessary, the redistricting law would specify the newly established districts that senators would represent.
- 2 **Ballot proposition.** States the question to be submitted to the people at the 2000 general election: Should the state constitution should be amended so as to replace the Senate and House with a single legislative body called the Senate, beginning in 2003?
- 3 **Number of members.** Sets the number of senators, by law, at 135, and eliminates references to

representatives.

- 4 **Legislative districts.** Sets the number of Senate districts, by law, at 135 and eliminates references to House districts.
- 5 **Effective date.** Makes the constitutional amendment, if it is adopted in 2000, effective for legislators whose terms begin in January, 2003.