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Overview

This bill authorizes local jurisdictions to adopt the use of ranked-choice voting for local elections. A ranked-choice voting election permits voters to rank a number of candidates for office in order of preference, and the election results are tabulated in a series of rounds, eliminating candidates based on the strength of their rankings by voters, until the candidate(s) to be elected have received an established threshold of votes sufficient for election.

Section

- 1 Applicability.** 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-choice voting elections, to the extent they are consistent with the provisions established in the bill.
- 2 Definitions.** Provides definitions for a number of terms used throughout the bill.
- 3 Authorization to adopt ranked-choice voting; implementation.** Authorizes cities, counties, towns, and school districts to adopt the use of ranked-choice voting for local offices.

Procedures for adopting this method of voting and certain other general standards for implementation are provided. Voter approval would be required in the case of a charter city or county, otherwise adoption is permitted by ordinance or resolution of the governing body. A decision about the use of ranked-choice voting must be made at least 30 days prior to the first day for filing of affidavits of candidacy for the election.

Section

- 4** **Ballots.** 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 the traditional voting method.

The chief election official is required to determine the ballot format after a voting mechanism has been selected.

5 **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.** On election night, within each precinct, the election judges must record and publicly declare the number of first choice votes cast for each candidate in the precinct. All electronic voting data and ballots must then be securely transferred to the tabulation center.

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.

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).

- 6** **Tabulation of votes.** Establishes mathematical and procedural standards for tabulating ranked-choice votes and determining the result, including 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.

- 7** **Reporting results.** Establishes standards for the vote total summary statements required to be produced within each precinct and by the ranked-choice voting tabulation center, and the election abstract. The summary statements must be certified as true and accurate and signed by the individuals making the certification.

- 8** **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, may request a recount at the candidate's own expense, also subject to administrative rules governing recounts.

Section

- 9** **Postelection review of ranked-choice voting systems.** Establishes standards for postelection review of a ranked-choice voting system. Postelection review is required only where tabulation software is used to determine the winner of an election and the election is not subject to a recount. To the extent practicable, the postelection review must follow the existing standards and procedures in law for postelection review of traditional-method voting elections. Other procedural requirements are provided in the bill.
- 10** **Testing of ranked-choice voting systems.** Establishes a cross reference to a section of existing law providing for testing of voting systems.
- 11** **Notice of filing dates.** Requires a notice of filings posted by the municipal clerk for local elections to indicate the method of voting to be used at the election.
- 12** **Electronic voting systems; purchasing.** Establishes minimum standards and functionality for all electronic voting systems purchased in the state, including a requirement that the system be capable of handling a ranked-choice voting election.