

# HOUSE RESEARCH

## Bill Summary

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**Subject:** Elected Public Utilities Commission

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### Overview

This bill provides for the members of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to be elected, rather than appointed by the governor. Under the bill one member of the PUC would be elected from each congressional district. The bill makes a number of changes in election laws to reflect the election of PUC members.

#### Section

- 1** **Candidate.** Adds candidates for election to the PUC to the definition of candidate in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 10A, which governs campaign finance and public disclosure.
- 2** **Place of filing.** Provides that candidates for and members of the PUC must file statements of economic interest with the Board of Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure.
- 3** **Contribution limits.** Adds PUC candidates to the law governing campaign contribution limits. The contribution limits for a PUC candidate would be identical to the limits applied to candidates for state senate.
- 4** **State and local offices.** Adds PUC candidates to law governing affidavits that must be filed by candidates for state and local offices.
- 5** **Amount; dishonored checks; consequences.** Adds PUC candidates to law governing filing fees for people who file affidavits of candidacy. The filing fee for a PUC candidate would be \$50.
- 6** **Allocation of election expenses.** Adds PUC to law governing procedures for allocation of election expenses for elections that are held concurrently.

## Section

- 7**        **Officers.** Adds PUC members to officials to be elected at the state general election.
- 8**        **State and county nonpartisan primary ballot.** Adds PUC to list of candidates that appear on nonpartisan primary ballots.
- 9**        **Vacancy in office of Public Utilities Commission member.** Provides that a vacancy on the PUC must be filed at a special election scheduled by the PUC between 60 and 90 days after the vacancy occurs. Authorizes the PUC to declare a vacancy due to illness or absence of a member for a 90-day period. Describes circumstances under which the PUC may appoint a member to fill the vacancy temporarily or for the remainder of the term.
- 10**       **Special Public Utilities Commission election.** Specifies the duties of the State Canvassing Board with regard to a special election for a PUC member. Provides for election contests and certificates of election.
- 11**       **General.** Adds the PUC to the list of offices subject to election contests.
- 12**       **Candidate.** Adds the PUC to the list of offices covered by the chapter of law governing fair campaign practices.
- 13**       **Election of members.** Provides that the PUC consists of one members elected at a state general election from each congressional district for a six-year term. Requires each commissioner to reside within the congressional district in which election is sought at the time of election.
- 14**       **Transition.** Specifies procedures for a transition from the current appointed PUC to the new elected PUC. Provides for staggering of terms of elected PUC members.
- 15**       **Chair.** Provides that the PUC chair will be elected by a majority vote of the commissioners for a term of four years.
- 16**       **Refund of contributions to political parties and candidates.** Amends the political contribution refund law to exclude contributions to candidates for the PUC.
- 17**       **Repeal.** Repeals Minnesota Statutes, section 216A.03, subdivisions 1 and 1a. These subdivisions provided for appointment, removal, and filling of vacancies for the current five-member PUC. These provisions are all superseded by the election process established in this bill.