

Subject Rochester school board election

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Overview

Independent School Board No. 535, Rochester, uses an alley system for school board elections. Under this system, candidates are elected at large but each candidate runs for a specified seat. In contrast, most other Minnesota school districts have standard at-large elections, where candidates run for any seat. This bill amends the special law that granted the Rochester district the authority to run elections under the alley system and instead requires the school board elections to be run under the at-large system that applies to most other school districts.

In 1969, the legislature passed a special law relating to the Rochester school district. Citing a 1967 law that resulted in converting the district from a special district to an independent district, section one of the 1969 law provided that the district would continue to be governed by the same board until the 1969 annual election, when seven board members would be elected, with specified terms until successors were elected, and authorized the board to divide the district into seven election districts. Section three provided that if the district was not divided into election districts, the school board members would be elected at large, until and unless election districts were established as provided by the 1969 act.

In 1974, the legislature amended section three of the 1969 special law. The 1974 law authorized the board to adopt a resolution providing that board members would be elected at large, with ballot language indicating that candidates would file for a specified position number.

In 1980, the legislature amended the 1974 law, providing that the board could organize at a different time than required under statute.

Each of the 1969, 1974, and 1980 laws included a provision stating that the act was effective upon approval by the governing body of the district.

The Minnesota Constitution prohibits special legislation, which is legislation that applies to part of a class—a particular person, thing, or a locale within a given class. However, the legislature can enact special laws relating to local government units, but the legislation is only effective after it is approved by the affected unit. Minnesota Statutes, section 645.021, establishes requirements for local government units to approve special laws, including approval by resolution by a majority vote of the members of the governing body unless the legislation specifies another method of approval, and filing a copy of the resolution with the secretary of state. Section 645.023 provides exceptions to the local approval requirement.

Summary

Section	Description
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| 1 | Independent School District No. 535, Rochester.
Strikes a provision authorizing the Rochester school district to elect members at large, with candidates filing for specified seats. Requires the district to conduct elections in accordance with chapter 205A, and for school board membership to be governed by section 123B.09. Allows the district to use the procedures in section 205A.12 to alter its organization into separate election districts despite being a district in a city of the first class. |
| 2 | Special law.
Declares that section 1 is a special law pursuant to the Constitutional provision relating to special laws and that it applies to the Rochester school district. |
| 3 | Effective date.
Provides that section 1 is effective upon approval by the governing body of the school district and applies to school district elections held after completion of the approval under section 645.021. Requires the local approval process to be completed by June 30, 2026, and to apply to the 2026 school district election. |



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