

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

ELEC 4/19/2019

LRB Number	19-1170/1	Introduction Number	SB-071	Estimate Type	Original
Description aids to counties and municipalities for certain special election costs and making an appropriation					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

2019 Senate Bill 71 requires the Elections Commission to reimburse counties and municipalities for certain costs incurred in the administration of special primaries and special elections for state or national office. A cost is eligible for reimbursement only if certain conditions are met, including that the commission determines the cost is reasonable and the rate paid by the county or municipality for the cost does not exceed the rate customarily paid for similar costs at a primary or election that is not a special primary or election.

Statewide Special Elections

In preparation of this fiscal estimate, WEC staff reviewed costs reported by local election officials for representative statewide elections, including recent statewide special primaries and elections. This fiscal estimate attempts to relate cost data previously reported by local election officials to the cost categories outlined in 2019 Senate Bill 71. Miscellaneous costs reported by local election officials that may be outside of the specific categories outlined by the bill have been included for reference. These costs may include costs for election-related tasks outlined in the draft bill such as staffing costs for conducting in-person absentee voting and post-election data entry of voter registration and participation data into the statewide voter registration database. Local election officials have also used this category to identify administrative costs not identified in the draft bill, such as new polling place announcement mailings, mileage for picking up election materials from the county office and replacement voting booths. These costs are not standard across all jurisdictions. The costs identified in the draft bill could not be segregated from the other costs in this category and have been included in this fiscal estimate for your reference.

Costs attributed to the categories outlined in Senate Bill 71 for the following statewide elections are as follows:

- 2012 Recall Primary (Office of Governor): \$6,307,911.12
- 2012 Recall Election (Office of Governor): \$7,111,830.45
- 2016 Presidential Preference and Spring Election: \$ 5,556,898.04
- 2016 Presidential and General Election: \$7,919,164.57

The attached includes a chart of costs broken up by each election and cost type.

Special Election Costs for Other State Offices

In developing this estimate, the WEC made the assumption that "state election" meant an election for a statewide office such as Governor, Supreme Court, or constitutional offices such as Treasurer. There are other offices for which the WEC serves as the filing officer for nomination papers, such as state Assembly, state Senate, and Circuit Court. The approximate costs reflected in this estimate are only in relation to statewide contests. The WEC and predecessor agencies have not collected cost data from municipalities or counties for races that are not statewide. If the WEC was directed to reimburse local election offices for other state level offices such as Assembly, Senate, and judicial races, costs specific to the election type would need to be collected. It may be possible to deduce the cost of a smaller election by determining a per-voter cost to adjust for the scale of an election for a smaller jurisdiction.

Administrative Costs

WEC staff has also identified significant costs with administering a reimbursement program for any appropriation made as a result of this legislation. Staff estimates that the processing of each reimbursement request, including determining the reasonableness of each request as required by the bill, would take an average of one hour of staff time per submission. For a statewide special primary or election, the effects of this bill would result in an additional, estimated cost of more than 2,000 staff hours at a median rate of \$27/hour plus fringe benefits and supplies, for a total estimated cost of \$90,000. For smaller special primaries or elections for state-level offices,

the administrative cost of this requirement would result in a similar cost of one hour of staff time per municipality and county in the district and would depend on the number of jurisdictions included in the district.

By directive of the Elections Commission, WEC staff discontinued collecting election cost data from municipal and county election officials in 2017. The bill would require the WEC to reinstate this process, not only to make appropriate reimbursements, but to make determinations required by the bill, specifically that the cost is reasonable, that the rate paid does not exceed the rate customarily paid for similar costs at regular elections, and that, if the special primary or election coincides with a regular election, that the cost does not exceed the amount that would be incurred if the elections did not coincide. These factors would require the WEC to attempt to continually update its analysis of reasonable and average costs based on imperfect data and taking into consideration a wide variety of municipal and county populations, organizational structures and available resources. Depending upon the level of specificity anticipated by the bill and the local jurisdictions, this analysis may require significant staff effort and time.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications

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Statewide Election Costs by Category 2012-2016

Cost Type	Special Primary (2012 Governor Recall Primary)	Special Election (2012 Governor Recall Election)	Statewide Primary (2016 Pres Pref and Spring Election)	Statewide Election (2016 Presidential and General Election)
Polling Place Costs	\$29,188.45	\$27,297.40	\$349,651.06*	\$407,013.96*
Poll worker wages	\$2,453,670.26	\$2,819,110.13	\$3,241,004.80	\$4,251,732.01
Election notice costs	\$242,705.77	\$251,914.57	\$341,224.74	\$360,882.10
Printing and postage for absentee ballots	N/A**	N/A**	\$205,785.70	\$430,094.29
Cost for ballot and poll book	\$728,645.81	\$984,103.55	\$807,430.05	\$1,096,318.44
Cost for ballot bags and security seals	\$11,618.49	\$10,791.22	N/A***	N/A***
Voting Equipment Costs	\$617,190.90	\$596,031.93	\$904,982.07#	\$997,084.15#
Memory Device Costs	\$117,798.05	\$55,924.82	See below#	See below#
Local Election Costs (including wages for county canvass and post-election data entry)	\$1,758,462.01	\$1,961,758.77	\$737,306.14	\$1,417,783.87
Miscellaneous Costs	\$348,631.38	\$404,898.01	\$224,146.61	\$362,353.86
Total Costs	\$6,307,911.12	\$7,111,830.45	\$5,556,898.04	\$7,919,164.57

* Costs include poll book printing
 ** Costs accounted for in Local Election Costs and ballot costs
 *** Costs accounted for in Miscellaneous costs
 # Costs include memory devices