

### Fiscal Estimate - 2021 Session

Original     
  Updated     
  Corrected     
  Supplemental

<b>LRB Number</b> <b>21-1491/1</b>	<b>Introduction Number</b> <b>SB-021</b>
<b>Description</b> aids to counties and municipalities for certain special election costs and making an appropriation	
<b>Fiscal Effect</b>	
<b>State:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> No State Fiscal Effect <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate	
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Appropriations <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Appropriations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Create New Appropriations	<input type="checkbox"/> Increase Existing Revenues <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Existing Revenues <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs - May be possible to absorb within agency's budget <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs
<b>Local:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> No Local Government Costs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate	
1. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory 2. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory	3. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory
<b>5. Types of Local Government Units Affected</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Towns <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Village <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Counties <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/> School Districts <input type="checkbox"/> WTCS Districts	
<b>Fund Sources Affected</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GPR <input type="checkbox"/> FED <input type="checkbox"/> PRO <input type="checkbox"/> PRS <input type="checkbox"/> SEG <input type="checkbox"/> SEGS	
<b>Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations</b>	
<b>Agency/Prepared By</b>	<b>Authorized Signature</b>
ELEC/ Richard Rydecki (608) 261-2015	Meagan Wolfe (608) 266-8175
	<b>Date</b>
	2/15/2021

## Fiscal Estimate Narratives

ELEC 2/15/2021

LRB Number	21-1491/1	Introduction Number	SB-021	Estimate Type	Original
<b>Description</b> aids to counties and municipalities for certain special election costs and making an appropriation					

### Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

The proposed legislation requires the Elections Commission to reimburse counties and municipalities for certain costs incurred in the administration of special primaries and special elections for state office. Current law defines "state office" as the following: governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, attorney general, state superintendent of public instruction, justice of the supreme court, court of appeals judge, circuit court judge, state senator, state representative to the assembly, and district attorney. 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 available data for 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 the legislation. Miscellaneous costs reported by local election officials that may be outside of the specific categories outlined by the bill have been included for reference. The miscellaneous costs included in the available data 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, but those specific costs have not been itemized. 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 Assembly Bill 64 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

#### Special Election Costs for County-Wide Offices

Available data from previous elections where costs were collected will also provide an estimate for any county-wide special elections. Several offices covered by this bill, such as circuit court judge and district attorney, represent entire counties and county and municipal cost data can be aggregated and compared for purposes of evaluating the potential costs associate with this legislation. Based on the last cost data the agency has collected (2016 Presidential Preference Primary and 2016 General Election), here is a sample of some county-wide election costs:

- Barron County: \$80,597.88 (primary); \$103,937.34 (general election)
- Iron County: \$23,584.46 (primary); \$21,584.18 (general election)
- Washington County: \$166,489.97 (primary); \$196,288.26 (general election)
- Dane County: \$814,113.85 (primary); \$1,101,251.19 (general election)
- Milwaukee County: \$734,644.53 (primary); \$614,473.34 (general election)

This data includes the same cost categories represented in the table in the "Statewide Special Election" section of this memo. The same nuances and limitations identified regarding that data would also apply to the data for county-wide special elections.

#### Special Election Costs for Other State Offices

Over the past five years, the State of Wisconsin has conducted twelve special elections for state and federal offices. 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.

In total, there have been 19 special elections called for Senate and Assembly seats since 2010. For 16 of these elections, primaries were also required which meant there were 35 total special elections for those 19 seats. In total there were 14 Assembly seats and 5 Senate seats that required special elections during this time period.

#### **Administrative Costs**

WEC staff has also identified 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. The estimated total of WEC costs for processing reimbursements would be dependent on the number of counties and municipalities in each special election district and how many special elections were required for each fiscal year.

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 when reimbursements for special elections are required and may require additional cost data collection necessary to establish reasonable cost thresholds. The agency will need to use this data to determine 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 regularly 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**



# Wisconsin Elections Commission

212 East Washington Avenue | Third Floor | P.O. Box 7984 | Madison, WI 53707-7984  
(608) 266-8005 | elections@wi.gov | elections.wi.gov

**DATE:** February 9, 2021

**TO:** State Senator André Jacque

**FROM:** Meagan Wolfe  
Administrator

**SUBJECT:** Fiscal Estimate for Senate Bill 21

The proposed legislation requires the Elections Commission to reimburse counties and municipalities for certain costs incurred in the administration of special primaries and special elections for state office. Current law defines “state office” as the following: governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state treasurer, attorney general, state superintendent of public instruction, justice of the supreme court, court of appeals judge, circuit court judge, state senator, state representative to the assembly, and district attorney. 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

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Costs attributed to the categories outlined in Assembly Bill 64 for the following statewide elections are as follows:

- 2012 Recall Primary (Office of Governor): \$6,307,911.12
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- 2016 Presidential Preference and Spring Election: \$ 5,556,898.04
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*Wisconsin Elections Commissioners*

Ann S. Jacobs, chair | Marge Bostelmann | Julie M. Glancey | Dean Knudson | Robert Spindell | Mark L. Thomsen

Administrator  
Meagan Wolfe

## Special Election Cost Bill (SB-021)

February 9, 2021

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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	\$27,297.4	\$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 printing	\$ 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	\$1,758,462.01	\$ 1,961,758.77	\$737,306.14	\$1,417,783.87

canvass and post-election data entry)				
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

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In total, there have been 19 special elections called for Senate and Assembly seats since 2010. For 16 of these elections, primaries were also required which meant there were 35 total special elections for those 19 seats. In total there were 14 Assembly seats and 5 Senate seats that required special elections during this time period.

Year	Primaries	Elections	Senate/Assembly
2011	2	5	5 Assembly
2012	1	1	1 Senate
2013	4	4	4 Assembly
2014	0	0	N/A
2015	3	3	1 Assembly, 2 Senate

2016	0	0	N/A
2017	0	0	N/A
2018	5	5	3 Assembly, 2 Senate
2019	1	1	1 Assembly
2020	0	0	N/A
Totals	16	19	14 Assembly, 5 Senate

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CC: Michael Gallagher (Legislative Reference Bureau)