

Fiscal Estimate - 2009 Session

Original Updated Corrected Supplemental

LRB Number **09-0174/1** Introduction Number **AJR-002**

Description
Eliminating the spring election (first consideration)

Fiscal Effect

State:

No State Fiscal Effect
 Indeterminate

Increase Existing Appropriations Increase Existing Revenues Increase Costs - May be possible to absorb within agency's budget
 Decrease Existing Appropriations Decrease Existing Revenues Yes No
 Create New Appropriations Decrease Costs

Local:

No Local Government Costs
 Indeterminate

1. Increase Costs 3. Increase Revenue
 Permissive Mandatory Permissive Mandatory

2. Decrease Costs 4. Decrease Revenue
 Permissive Mandatory Permissive Mandatory

5. Types of Local Government Units Affected
 Towns Village Cities
 Counties Others
 School Districts WTCS Districts

Fund Sources Affected **Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations**

GPR FED PRO PRS SEG SEGS 20.511

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Fiscal Estimate Narratives

GAB 3/25/2009

LRB Number	09-0174/1	Introduction Number	AJR-002	Estimate Type	Original
Description Eliminating the spring election (first consideration)					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

Description: Fiscal Estimate for proposed constitutional amendment to eliminate the Spring Election for non-partisan offices so that all regularly scheduled elections will be held in November.

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate:

The proposed constitutional amendment would eliminate the spring election for nonpartisan offices so that all regularly scheduled elections will be held in November. The proposal would also shorten terms of nonpartisan officers who are elected after the effective date of the amendment in order to facilitate the transition to new term expirations.

It is a challenge to get a definitive fiscal estimate of the proposed constitutional amendment because the costs for conducting elections in Wisconsin can vary by county, municipality, number of contests, number of candidates, and or the Election Cycle (i.e., 2-year versus 4-year elections). In addition, it is difficult to determine whether as a result of the proposed constitutional amendment, if there would be a total net cost savings, because were the spring election eliminated, not all election administration costs would equally shift to the fall.

At best, assuming all regularly scheduled spring elections were eliminated, we can offer an estimate for how the following principal costs for conducting elections in Wisconsin would be directly affected:

A. Estimated Cost of Conducting Spring Elections

Based on the best available fiscal data we were able to gather for conducting Spring Elections, the principal costs for conducting Spring Elections range from approximately 2.5 to 3 million dollars.

B. The Cost for Printing Ballots

Assuming the spring election for nonpartisan offices were eliminated, the costs for printing ballots for an election could increase by approximately 40% because all nonpartisan and partisan contests may only fit on one double-side or two page ballot. Currently, for a single election, approximately two and a half million (2,500,000) optical scan and paper ballots are prepared and printed statewide at an estimated cost of twenty cents each, totaling \$750,000. While approximately one and a half million (1,500,000) ballots are printed and prepared for a single primary election due to a projected lower turnout.

C. The Cost for Programming Voting Equipment

Assuming the spring election for nonpartisan offices were eliminated, the cost to program existing voting machines statewide would increase approximately 35 to 40 percent due to the number of additional candidates and contests that would have to be added to the fall ballots. Most voting equipment vendors charge a base programming fee but then charge additional fees based on the number of contests and candidates within an election. The current cost to program all existing voting machines for a single election statewide is approximately \$500,000.

D. The Cost for Election Notices

Assuming the spring election for nonpartisan offices were eliminated, the costs for municipal and county clerks to publish certain election notices can either continue or increase in the Fall Election cycle, depending on the number of ballot styles for the particular election cycle. Currently, for county clerks the estimated costs for publishing election notices for a single election can start at \$84,000, while for municipal clerks publication costs for an election can start at \$60,000.

E. The Cost of Election Staff

Assuming the spring election for nonpartisan offices were eliminated, the cost for administering an election could either remain the same or increase, depending on the number of hours it takes state county, and municipal election staff to prepare and manage the election, and the number of poll workers needed statewide on Election Day. Currently, it takes approximately over 50,000 hours for state, county, and municipal staff to administer and conduct a single statewide election, while the total cost for poll workers statewide on Election Day can start at approximately \$900,000.

F. Other Factors to Consider

There are qualitative human factors that are impossible to quantify. If the Spring Election for non-partisan offices were to be transferred to November, the fall ballot is likely to be longer, more complex and as a result, that would undoubtedly cause confusion for the average voter. Based on actual experiences reported to the G.A.B. by municipalities, it is conceivable that many voters would miss making a selection on a multi-page ballot.

Summary

Based on the best available information we are able to gather, we are not able to provide a bottom line response of whether it would be cheaper or more efficient to administer a single election in the fall, because it really does depend on the election. Evidence does show, however, that voter turnout is higher for fall elections. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that by transferring the Spring Election to November, a greater turnout for non-partisan offices due to those offices being included on the fall election ballot would occur, and a spike in the overall fall election would result.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications

Without doing more detailed research, it not possible to make a meaningful statement on what the long-range fiscal implications may be.