

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:	
<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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs
Local:	
<input type="checkbox"/> No Local Government Costs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indeterminate	
1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase Costs <input type="checkbox"/> Permissive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mandatory 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease Costs <input 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
5. Types of Local Government Units Affected <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> School Districts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WTCS Districts	
Fund Sources Affected	
<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 20.511	
Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations	
Agency/Prepared By	Authorized Signature
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Date	
5/25/2009	

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

GAB 5/25/2009

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

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 for public officials will be held in November of even-numbered years. The proposal would also shorten terms of certain nonpartisan officials 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 for the proposed constitutional amendment because the costs of conducting elections in Wisconsin can vary by county, municipality, number of contests, number of candidates, length of terms, and the election cycle year (i.e., even-numbered vs. odd-numbered election years). In addition, it is difficult to get precise election administration cost figures because so much of the costs for conducting elections are the opportunity costs of assigning salaried staff to perform election-related duties.

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:

Although the cost of the spring primary and election will be eliminated, a large portion of those costs may incrementally increase the costs for conducting the fall election. Although it is difficult to estimate the precise cost increases, we can describe the incremental cost increase of the principal cost components (below) for administering the fall election by adding non-partisan public offices to the ballot in the fall of even-numbered years.

- Estimated Cost of Conducting Spring Elections - Based on the best available fiscal data we were able to gather for conducting Spring Elections, the principal statewide costs to local government for conducting Spring Elections range from approximately 2.5 to 3 million dollars.

- Election notices - Municipal and school district clerks will have the same costs for their Type A Notice (notice of election including office, incumbent, term and expiration date), Type B Notice (pro-rata share of the sample ballot) and Type C Notice (Notice of referenda and explanatory statement) as in the Spring. County clerks costs will increase incrementally since they will have more county and state offices on the fall ballot. The spring costs for the Type D Notice (list of polling place locations, poll hours and accessibility provisions) and Type E Notice (Information on absentee voting) costs will be saved because the information is the same for the fall publications. Currently, for county clerks the estimated total 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

- Ballot Preparation and Printing - Municipal and school district clerks will still have to pay their share of the paper ballot for their offices. Moreover, county and state offices will increase slightly, which means it is very likely optical scan voting will have to go to two ballots to accommodate the increased number of offices and candidates. This will increase the cost of the ballot stock.

The costs for printing ballots for the fall 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.

- Electronic Voting Equipment Programming - Vendors charge by the number of offices and candidates when setting up ballots. Where the county or municipal clerk does their own voting equipment programming, the cost is the amount of time and charge back if done for another jurisdiction, for the staff doing the work. 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 estimated current cost to program existing voting devices and related equipment for a single election statewide is approximately \$500, 000.

- Absentee Ballot Postage - This cost is always borne by the municipality in regularly scheduled elections. The spring election costs for postage are eliminated, but they will be replaced by an incremental cost increase in the fall because the ballot will be larger and require more postage.
- Poll Worker Reimbursement - This cost is always borne by the municipality in regularly scheduled elections. The cost for the spring election goes away, but there will likely be an incremental increase in the fall if more poll workers are needed because of the larger ballots and increased turnout. The cost of reimbursing municipal and school district boards of canvassers is carried over from the spring election. The total cost for poll workers statewide on Election Day starts at approximately \$900,000 and increases based on staffing levels.
- Polling Place Supplies - It is difficult to determine what the cost of supplies is for an election because it varies. The spring supply costs will be saved except to the extent the municipal clerk needs more pens, pencils, forms or ballot containers and other transmittal containers. Also, if municipalities and school districts provide tally sheets for paper ballots, those costs will be the same as in the spring.
- Administrative Staff Costs - While these costs are eliminated from the spring, the additional preparation, certification, proofing, and tracking costs for the fall election will increase significantly in the fall to reflect the additional offices and candidates. It is likely municipalities will have to hire additional short-term staff to complete the election related tasks in the required time frame. 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. Currently, it takes an estimated minimum of 50,000 hours for state, county, and municipal staff to administer and conduct a single statewide election.
- 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.

Assuming all regularly scheduled spring elections for nonpartisan offices are eliminated, in presidential election years there will still be the costs of administering the presidential preference election in February. Currently, in presidential election years, the county pays the Type A and Type B notice, ballot preparation and printing, and voting equipment programming costs as well as the county board of canvassers costs to certify the results to the G.A.B. The municipalities pay the poll worker, absentee ballot postage and polling place supply costs. This does not include the costs of salaried employees

Long-Range Fiscal Implications

Local government will save an indeterminate amount of money primarily due to the elimination of poll worker and absentee ballot postage costs. Other administrative costs will be shifted to the fall of even-numbered years, specifically election notice publication, ballot printing, voting equipment programming and staffing costs. Election preparation will require increased training for election officials along with training and recruitment of poll workers recruitment as well as increased allocation of staff in even-numbered years to meet the time sensitive deadlines in the election calendar.