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**State Government, Elections &  
Information Technology Committee**

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**HB 1903**

**Brief Description:** Concerning state reimbursement of election costs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Koster, Chapman, Volz, Doglio, McDonald, Dolan and Muri.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the state to pay a proportional share of any state primary or general election held in both even and odd-numbered years.
- Requires the state to pay for the cost of any mandatory election recount.

**Hearing Date:** 2/15/17

**Staff:** Megan Palchak (786-7105).

**Background:**

The Secretary of State oversees the state election process and regulates state election procedures. The county auditors conduct all elections within the county and are responsible for processing ballots.

A statewide primary and general election are held every year. Federal, state, and most county offices are elected in even-numbered years. Elections in odd-numbered years generally are limited to positions for city and local districts as well as any federal, state, and county offices with an unexpired term. Elections for state and local measures and special elections can happen in any year.

Counties pay for the costs of operating elections. When a city, town, or district holds an election, it must pay the county its prorated share of election costs. The state must reimburse counties for its portion of any primary or general election held in odd-numbered years where a state officer

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position or state measure is on the ballot. The state does not reimburse counties for the primary and general election costs in even-numbered years.

Any political party, election candidate, or group of voters may request a recount of votes canvassed in an election. Counties may charge the cost of conducting an election recount to the requesting party seeking the recount, unless the recount changes the election results. A county canvassing board must conduct a recount in an election where the margin of difference between candidates is less than 2,000 votes and less than 1 percent of the total votes cast.

**Summary of Bill:**

The state must pay counties its proportional share of primary and general election costs in even-numbered years as well as odd-numbered years. The Secretary of State must pay each county for the state's share of election costs within 30 days of receiving a voucher. If the payment exceeds the appropriated funds, the Secretary must request sufficient funds from the Legislature during the next legislative session to cover all remaining balances.

The state is responsible for paying the costs for any mandatory election recount when automatically triggered by the outcome margin. The Secretary of State must request sufficient funding to reimburse counties for the cost of such recounts. Counties may continue to charge the party or candidate seeking a non-mandatory recount.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 13, 2017.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2018.