

---

**State Government & Tribal Relations  
Committee**

---

**HB 1481**

**Brief Description:** Concerning state reimbursement of election costs and payment of prepaid postage return costs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dolan, Walsh, Hudgins, Gregerson, Senn, Tarleton, Eslick, Doglio, Reeves, Valdez, Pollet, Ramos and Jinkins; by request of Secretary of State.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the state to reimburse counties for the prorated share of state elections costs for primary and general elections in even-numbered years, and federal elections costs for all primary and general elections.
- Requires the state to reimburse the costs of mandatory recounts for certain offices.
- Requires prepaid postage to be included on all ballot return envelopes for all elections and requires the state to reimburse counties in all elections for the cost of return postage.

**Hearing Date:** 2/1/19

**Staff:** Desiree Omli (786-7105).

**Background:**

Election Costs.

The state must pay a prorated share of the cost of any primary or general election in odd-numbered years when state officers or measures are on the ballot. The state must also pay a prorated share of costs associated with elections held to fill a vacancy in the United States Senate or House of Representatives.

The county auditor apportions the state's share of election costs and files for reimbursement with the Secretary of State (Secretary). The Secretary must include in the biennial budget request

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

sufficient funds to cover the prorated share of election costs, and appropriations must be made specifically for reimbursement for election costs. The Secretary is required to pay interest for any period of time in excess of 30 days after the receipt of a reimbursement voucher and entry of an allotment from specifically appropriated funds.

For recounts, the canvassing board determines the cost of conducting a recount of votes. The cost of a recount is deducted from the amount deposited by the applicant for the recount, except when the recount changes the result of the nomination or election for which the recount was ordered. The cost for a mandatory recount cannot be charged to any candidate. The state is required to pay the costs of mandatory recounts for statewide measures.

#### Elections Materials.

The county auditor must send each voter a ballot, security envelop in which to conceal the ballot after voting, a large envelope in which to return the security envelope, a declaration that the voter must sign, and instructions on how to obtain information about the election, how to mark the ballot, and how to return the ballot to the county auditor.

A person may return a ballot by various ways, one of which includes by mail at his or her own expense.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

The return envelope for all elections must include prepaid postage. The state must reimburse counties for:

- its prorated share of state elections costs for primary and general elections held in even-numbered years and federal elections costs for all primary and general elections;
- the cost of including return postage on all mailed ballots for all elections if postage is paid by the county; and
- mandatory recounts for an office where the candidates filed the declaration of candidacy with the Secretary, any legislative office, and any congressional office.

For the mandatory recounts of the specified offices above, the Secretary must include a budget request to the Legislature during the next legislative session for sufficient funds to reimburse all the costs of the recounts. The Secretary must reimburse the costs within 30 days of allotment of specifically appropriated funds.

The provision requiring that the state pay interest is removed. Rather, the state is required to pay reimbursement costs within 30 days after the receipt of a properly executed and documented voucher for such expense, until the funds appropriated for reimbursement are exhausted. If the funds appropriated for reimbursement are insufficient, the Secretary must include a budget request to the Legislature during the next legislative session for reimbursement of all remaining claims. The Secretary must reimburse the county within 30 days of allotment of specifically appropriated funds.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2019.