
State Government & Tribal Relations Committee

SSB 5182

Brief Description: Concerning procedures and deadlines for candidate filing.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on State Government & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Hunt, Boehnke, Keiser, MacEwen, Nobles, Shewmake, Trudeau, Wilson, C. and Wilson, J.).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Shifts the candidate filing period from two Mondays before Memorial Day until the following Friday to instead begin on the first Monday in May and end on the following Friday.
- Changes the filing officer with whom certain candidates must file their declaration of candidacy and filing fee.
- Specifies deadlines for the submission of candidate statements for inclusion in the voters' pamphlets.
- Adjusts the period during which county auditors may change precinct boundaries from up to 14 days before the candidate filing period to up to 7 days.

Hearing Date: 3/14/23

Staff: Desiree Omli (786-7105).

Background:

Candidate Filing.

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

Candidates for most elective offices must file a declaration of candidacy with the state to appear on the ballot. The filing period begins at the opening of business on the Monday two weeks before Memorial Day and ends at the close of business the following Friday. Candidates may mail in declarations of candidacy up to 10 days before the beginning of the filing period. Electronic declarations of candidacy may be filed from 9:00 a.m. the first day of the filing period until 4:00 p.m. on the last day of the filing period.

Candidates for the following offices must file declarations of candidacy with the Secretary of State (Secretary): statewide office, federal office, the state Legislature in a district which spans multiple counties, court of appeals in a district which spans multiple counties, and superior court in a district which spans multiple counties. Candidates for other offices must file declarations with the local county auditor.

Unless a candidate submits a filing fee petition, each candidate must pay a filing fee when filing a declaration of candidacy. Candidates for statewide office, federal office, legislative office in a district which spans multiple counties, and judicial office in a district which spans multiple counties must pay the fee to the Secretary for equal division among the counties included in the district. Candidates for a legislative or judicial office that includes territory from only one county and candidates for a city or town office must pay the filing fee to the county auditor.

Voters' Pamphlets.

The Secretary must print and distribute a voters' pamphlet to each household in the state, public libraries, and other locations the Secretary deems appropriate whenever a statewide ballot measure or office is scheduled to appear on the general election ballot. Candidates for statewide office may include in the voters' pamphlet candidate statements, a photograph, and information to contact their campaign. By rule, candidate statements and photographs must be submitted by the Friday following the last day of the filing period.

Each county auditor must produce a local voters' pamphlet for the entire county at each election. Local voters' pamphlets must be sent to every residence in each jurisdiction that has included information in the pamphlet. County auditors must adopt and publish administrative rules for production of local voters' pamphlets, including deadlines for submission of candidate statements.

Precinct Boundaries.

Each county is divided into election precincts for administrative purposes. The county legislative authority divides the county into election precincts and establishes precinct boundaries. Except for temporary modifications to reflect an annexation or incorporation, precinct boundaries must be fixed starting 14 days before the first day for candidate filing for the primary election until the day of the general election. Precincts are limited to 1500 active, registered voters, although the county legislative authority may establish a lower maximum size for its precincts.

Summary of Bill:

Candidate Filing.

The candidate filing period is shifted to begin on the first Monday in May and end the following Friday. Regular business hours during which declarations may be accepted, including for electronic filing, is standardized to between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Candidates for the state Legislature, court of appeals, and superior courts must file declarations of candidacy with the Secretary regardless of whether the office is in a district made up of voters from more than one county.

Filing fees must be paid to the respective filing officer with whom the candidate files their declaration of candidacy. Candidates for the state Supreme Court must pay their filing fee to the Secretary.

Voters' Pamphlets.

The Secretary may adopt rules setting a deadline for the submission of candidate statements and photographs for inclusion in the statewide voters' pamphlet. The county auditor, or if applicable the city clerk of a first-class or code city, must adopt deadlines for the submission of candidate statements for inclusion in the local voters' pamphlet. Any deadline adopted by the Secretary, county auditor, or city clerk must be no earlier than 11 days after the deadline for filing declarations of candidacy.

Precinct Boundaries.

County auditors may adjust precinct boundaries up to seven days before the beginning of the candidate filing period.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.