AN ACT Relating to commissioning a study on conservation district election costs under Title 29A RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the Washington state institute for public policy shall conduct an examination of the costs associated with conservation district elections under current law, and the projected costs and benefits for shifting conservation district elections to be held on general election ballots under Title 29A RCW and making related changes as described below.

(2) The examination under this section must specifically include:

(a) An analysis of the amount of money that each conservation district spends on holding elections for supervisors under current law, and a description of the funding sources that each conservation district utilizes to fund its elections;

(b) Information about voter turnout in each conservation district supervisor election in the past 20 years, and a calculation of the total cost per ballot cast that each conservation district spent in those elections;
(c) A projection of the costs that would be expected to be incurred by each county and each conservation district for its supervisor elections if the district were to hold its supervisor elections on general election ballots under the processes and procedures in Title 29A RCW, including:
   (i) Switching all supervisor positions to elected positions; and
   (ii) Changing term lengths to four years, with terms staggered such that elections are held every two years, to align with the elections for other local government officials;
(d) A projection of the costs that would be expected to be incurred by each county and each conservation district for its supervisor elections if, in addition to the changes described in (c) of this subsection, the conservation districts were divided into zones such that each zone is represented by a single supervisor, rather than electing each supervisor at-large throughout the district; and
(e) An overall assessment of other nonmonetary costs and benefits associated with switching conservation district supervisor elections to the general election ballots under Title 29A RCW and incorporating the changes described in (c) and (d) of this subsection.
(3) The study must be completed by December 1, 2023, and submitted in accordance with RCW 43.01.036 to the standing committees of the house of representatives and the senate with jurisdiction over elections and conservation district issues.
(4) This section expires June 30, 2024.