
State Government & Tribal Relations Committee

HB 1339

Brief Description: Shifting general elections for local governments to even-numbered years to increase voter participation.

Sponsors: Representatives Gregerson, Farivar, Mena, Nance, Stonier, Parshley, Thai, Scott, Goodman, Fey, Street, Doglio, Ramel, Simmons, Alvarado, Berg, Reed, Springer, Macri, Ryu, Peterson, Callan, Salahuddin, Duerr, Reeves, Berry, Ormsby, Hill, Pollet, Cortes and Fosse.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits cities, towns, and certain special purpose districts to choose to hold their elections in even-numbered years instead of odd-numbered years.

Hearing Date: 1/21/25

Staff: Connor Schiff (786-7093).

Background:

Every November, the state holds a statewide general election. In years that end in an even number, the election includes general elections for federal, state, and county officers, as well as state or local ballot measures such as initiatives, referenda, and constitutional amendments.

In years that end in an odd number, general elections are held for city, town, and special purpose district officers, subject to a few exceptions. In addition, odd-year elections may include elections for:

- filling the remainder of unexpired terms for state legislators, supreme court justices,

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- superior court judges, and federal, state, and county officers;
- county officers in a county governed by a charter that provides for odd-year elections; and
- state ballot measures.

State ballot measures must appear on the ballot at the next regular general election, and therefore they may appear in either even- or odd-numbered years. Special elections and recall elections also may occur in either even- or odd-numbered years.

In first-class and charter cities, voters may amend the city's charter by petition and majority vote. The legislative body of a noncharter code city may provide its voters the powers of initiative and referendum.

Summary of Bill:

Cities, towns, and certain special purpose districts may choose to hold their elections in even-numbered years instead of odd-numbered years. To select this option, the legislative body of the jurisdiction may adopt an ordinance or policy; voters may approve an ordinance or charter amendment referred by the legislative body; or, in jurisdictions in which citizens are permitted to propose an initiative or charter amendment, voters may propose and approve an initiative or charter amendment.

Prior to adoption, the legislative body must hold two public hearings at least 30 days apart to consider public input, and a final vote may not occur sooner than 30 days after the second hearing. If a jurisdiction chooses to switch its elections to even-numbered years, the term lengths of officers elected in the next odd-year election shall be either one year shorter or one year longer than provided by law. The length of the transitional time must be specified in the ordinance, policy, initiative, or charter amendment. If a city, town, or special purpose district elects to hold its elections in even-numbered year, all elected positions in the jurisdiction must be elected in even-numbered years.

The choice to switch must be adopted before January 15 of an odd-numbered year to take effect in that election cycle. A jurisdiction that chooses to switch back to odd numbered year elections must transition back with terms that are one year shorter than provided by law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 2025.

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