

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

ELEC 6/1/2017

LRB Number	17-1362/2	Introduction Number	SB-227	Estimate Type	Original
Description state aid to a school district of residence of a pupil attending a private school under the Racine and statewide parental choice programs					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

Under this bill, Elections Commission staff would review the sufficiency of election petitions which seek a school district referendum election. The election would determine whether the Department of Public Instruction may reduce state aids to public school districts from which students transfer to a private school participating in the Racine or statewide parental choice program. Agency staff would determine whether any such petition contains valid signatures of qualified electors equal to at least 20 percent of the number of electors who voted in the last election for school board members in the school district.

Elections Commission staff currently are not involved in the review of election petitions seeking a local referendum election, but agency staff does regularly review nomination papers, recall petitions, and other election petitions involving elections for state and federal offices. The additional agency workload resulting from this bill would depend upon the number of school districts potentially affected and more specifically the number and size of the election petitions submitted under the bill. According to the Department of Public Instruction, students from 184 school districts participate in the Racine or statewide parental school choice program in the current school year.

The number of participating voters in school board elections, and therefore the number of required signatures to be potentially submitted and reviewed under this bill, varies greatly among school districts. For the 2017 Spring Election, the last election involving elections for school board members, the Madison Metropolitan School District had 51,906 participating voters, the Green Bay School Area Public School District had 17,001 voters, and the Racine Unified School District had 12,808 voters. In a given year, agency staff may be required to review a small number of petitions containing only several hundred signatures, or a larger number of petitions containing tens of thousands of signatures. Depending upon the number of petitions and the timing of receipt of any petitions, agency staff may need to adjust workloads and priorities to accomplish review of the petitions within 31 days of their submission, as required under the bill. But the agency does not anticipate that the staff time and effort involved in applying its existing procedures to petitions submitted under the bill will increase agency costs.

Because the bill would authorize additional elections within school districts, the Elections Commission anticipates that local jurisdictions would incur additional costs to conduct elections resulting from successful petitions. Conducting elections requires expenditures for various tasks, including the preparation of ballots and election notices, programming voting equipment, and the costs to pay election inspectors and members of the boards of canvassers. If a referendum election under the bill is scheduled to occur on the date of a regularly scheduled election, the incremental costs related to including the referendum question on the ballot would be minimal. If the school board chooses to hold a special referendum election on a date other than a regular election, the school district would incur more significant costs for holding a separate election, and the municipalities and counties located in the school district would also incur costs for staff time and election-related tasks.

Costs for holding a separate special referendum election vary depending upon factors such as the number of electors, the offices or questions on the ballot, the number of polling places, and whether electronic voting equipment is used. The Elections Commission collects data regarding election costs from municipalities but not from school districts, which provide a rough illustration of the costs involved for conducting a separate election. Based upon this data, agency staff anticipates that, for each referendum election held pursuant to the bill, municipalities and school districts would incur combined costs ranging from several thousand dollars up to approximately \$15,000 - \$20,000.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications