

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

This bill establishes a presidential primary for Minnesota. Minnesota last conducted a presidential primary in 1992. The presidential primary established by this bill would be governed by the following general principles:

- **Presidential primary date: first Tuesday in March, or on a date selected by the party chairs.** The default first primary scheduled under this bill would occur on March 3, 2020, but could be changed by mutual agreement of the party chairs.
- **Disclosure of party choice.** The political party for whom a voter voted in the presidential primary would be recorded and become public information. A voter would be required to certify general agreement with the principles of the party for which the voter plans to vote.
- **Precinct caucuses would continue.** The primary would run in addition to precinct caucuses. The bill does not impact a party's right to hold a precinct caucus, or its right to determine what business is conducted at the caucus. The default caucus date in a presidential year would be one week prior to the presidential primary.
- **Absentee voting would be permitted.** The absentee voting period for the presidential primary would begin in mid-January of the primary year, if the primary is conducted on the first Tuesday in March.
- **The August state primary is not impacted.** Only candidates for president would appear on the ballot at the primary established by this bill. The state primary for other federal offices, and state and local offices, would continue to occur in August.

Section

- 1 **Public information lists.** Requires the publicly-available list of registered voters to include the party choice of a voter who voted in the most recent presidential primary.
- 2 **Time and manner of holding; postponement.** Modifies requirements related to the scheduling of precinct caucuses by prohibiting caucuses from occurring on the date of a presidential primary or town general election, and providing that the default caucus date in a presidential election year (if another date is not selected by agreement of the two largest major political parties) is one week prior to the presidential primary.
- 3 **Preference ballot.** Eliminates the office of president from the precinct caucus preference ballot established in law.
- 4 **Separate precincts; combined polling place.** Modifies certain deadlines that apply to the formation of a combined polling place, to reflect the establishment of a presidential primary.
- 5 **Boundary change procedure.** Provides a conforming reference to the law governing changes to precinct boundaries, to reflect the establishment of a presidential primary.
- 6 **Elections covered.** Expands the current law that allows voters to take time off from work in order to cast a ballot to include the new presidential primary established by this bill.
- 7 **Permanent registration; verification of registration.** Adds new text to the polling place roster used at a presidential primary, requiring voters to certify their general agreement with the principles of the party for which they plan to vote.
- 8 **Example ballot.** Provides a conforming reference to the current law requiring preparation of an example ballot by the secretary of state, to distinguish the presidential primary example ballot with the example ballot for the state primary and state general elections.
- 9 **Presidential primary established.** Establishes a presidential primary be held on the first Tuesday in March of a year in which the office of president is to be elected, or an alternate date mutually agreed-to by the major political parties.

This bill does not change the date of the state primary or other federal and state candidates, which would continue to occur in August, as provided in current law.
- 10 **Conducting presidential primary.** Establishes basic requirements for the conduct of the presidential primary. With some exceptions, the presidential primary would be administered similarly to state primary.

The primary would provide separate ballots for each party, and the party's ballot selected by a voter would be recorded on the polling place roster. The primary results must bind each party's election of delegates.
- 11 **Form of ballots; candidates on ballot.** Provides standards for the format of the presidential primary ballot. Among other requirements, the ballot must be formatted to permit a voter to vote for uncommitted delegates, or for a write-in candidate.

The candidates appearing on the ballot would be those submitted by the each party chair. The party chairs would determine whether votes for a write-in candidate are counted in the primary results.

Section

- 12** **Notice of presidential primary; sample ballots.** Provides standards to ensure proper public notice of the presidential primary and distribution of sample ballots.
- 13** **Reimbursement of election expenses.** Establishes a procedure for local governments to be reimbursed for their costs to administer the presidential primary. Funds for the reimbursement would be appropriated at a future date, subject to a budget request made by the secretary of state.
- Expenses qualifying for reimbursement are listed in subdivision 2. Requests for a reimbursement are only permitted for actual costs incurred, and would be due to the secretary of state within 60 days of a presidential primary, with payments issued no later than 90 days after the primary. A proportional allocation of reimbursement funds would be required if the legislative appropriation is not sufficient to reimburse the total amount of payment requests.
- 14** **Effective date.** Provides that the bill is effective July 1, 2017. The first presidential primary scheduled according to the terms of this bill would occur in 2020.