



Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

Fiscal Summary

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Fiscal Analyst: Hamza Syed (303-866-4976)

LCS TITLE: ELECTIONS TO FILL VACANCIES IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Fiscal Summary of Initiative 197

This fiscal summary, prepared by the nonpartisan Director of Research of the Legislative Council, contains a preliminary assessment of the measure's fiscal impact. A full fiscal impact statement for this initiative is or will be available at leg.colorado.gov/bluebook. This fiscal summary identifies the following impact.

State expenditures. Preliminarily, the measure is estimated to increase state expenditures in the Department of State (DOS) to implement several changes to elections systems and processes in order to hold legislative vacancy elections, rather than fill vacancies using party vacancy committees. Specifically, the DOS must modify election software and information technology systems, and conduct public awareness campaigns to inform voters about the changes to voting in Colorado vacancy elections. Costs will also increase in FY 2026-27 and future years, primarily related to increased cost reimbursement to counties provided by the state to conduct these elections (see local government impacts below). This potential increase will depend on eligible local costs and has not been estimated.

Local government impact. The measure increases costs for county clerks and other local election officials in several ways. Requiring ranked choice voting for vacancy elections increases the size and complexity of printed ballots, which will require that clerks educate voters, and revise processes for the operation of polling places and ballot counting. For some counties, this will require new election system software and equipment. Other counties will have costs to modify existing voting systems. Finally, the elimination of vacancy committee appointments will increase the number of special elections conducted to fill future vacancies in the state legislature and increase costs for affected counties where vacancies occur. A portion of local costs under the bill will be reimbursed by the state under current law.

Economic impacts. The measure has no direct impact on the state economy. Changes to elections may result in different leadership and different policies, which could have an economic effect. However, these effects depend on voter choices and future decision making.