



# Fiscal Note

## Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

### HB 26-1203: MODIFICATION OF COUNTY COMMISSIONER ELECTIONS

**Prime Sponsors:**

Rep. Marshall; Bacon

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**Fiscal note status:** The fiscal note reflects the introduced bill.

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### Summary Information

**Overview.** The bill requires counties with a population of 70,000 or more to have five commissioners elected through districts, or elected at-large with proportional ranked voting.

**Types of impacts.** The bill is projected to affect the following areas on an ongoing basis:

- Local Government

**Appropriations.** No appropriation is required.

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**Table 1**  
**State Fiscal Impacts**

Type of Impact	Budget Year FY 2026-27	Out Year FY 2027-28
State Revenue	\$0	\$0
State Expenditures	\$0	\$0
Transferred Funds	\$0	\$0
Change in TABOR Refunds	\$0	\$0
Change in State FTE	0.0 FTE	0.0 FTE

## **Summary of Legislation**

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The bill requires non-home rule counties with populations of 70,000 or more to have five commissioners. The bill outlines two methods for electing the five required commissioners, as follows:

- five commissioners residing in and representing five districts, with only residents of each district voting in that district's election; or
- five at-large commissioners using a proportional ranked voting method.

By its first regularly scheduled meeting in 2027, or its first meeting in the month following when a county exceeds a population of 70,000, the bill requires the county commissioners to designate the two alternative modes of electing and to refer the resolution to the registered voters of the county at the first general election following the adoption of the resolution to determine which method voters would prefer. The bill also authorizes voters to select a method through the initiative process. The bill then outlines requirements on term lengths for initial terms, petition requirements, votes needed to be designated on a party's primary, and the number of signatures needed for a minor party candidate to get onto the ballot.

## **Background**

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Currently, there are 10 Colorado counties with a population greater than 70,000 people, not including Denver and Broomfield, which are a consolidated city and county. Of the 10 counties, Adams, Arapahoe, El Paso, and Weld counties already have five commissioners, however Adams County uses at-large elections to elect their commissioners. Weld County also has some at-large commissioner positions, but is a home rule county and meets the requirements for home rule exemption under the bill. This bill impacts the remaining 6 counties that only have three commissioners: Boulder, Douglas, Jefferson, Mesa, Larimer, and Pueblo.

## **Local Government**

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Workload and costs for Boulder, Douglas, Jefferson, Mesa, Larimer, and Pueblo counties will increase from adding two more commissioners, holding the required referendum to select the method of electing commissioners, and redistricting to create new commissioner districts. To the extent additional counties reach the 70,000 population threshold, costs will increase for those counties in future years. It is assumed that counties would implement the changes and seat additional county commissioners no later than FY 2028-29. These impacts are discussed in more detail below.

## **New Commissioners**

When the six counties add two additional commissioners, this will result in costs to each county for salaries and benefits for additional commissioners. Additional costs for office space, computers, supplies, aides, support staff, and other expenses will also be incurred.

## **Election Costs**

Expenditures will increase for county clerks depending on which mode of election counties choose to implement. For races with districts, costs will increase to print ballots with additional races and to create unique ballots for each district. If a county chooses to implement rank choice voting, costs will increase to print a new ballot and to tally and report ranked choice voting outcomes.

## **Referendum**

Counties may have additional election costs to place the required referendum on the 2028 general election ballot. It is assumed that counties already have county offices or ballot measures that will require participation in the coordinated election. If this referendum is the sole county measure on the ballot, counties will incur additional costs. If other county offices or ballot measures are on the ballot, adding one additional measure may impact the share of coordinated election costs paid by the county. For informational purposes, large urban counties in past elections have had cost of around \$700,000 to participate in coordinated elections, which would be minimally impacted by the addition of one referred measure to a typical slate of county offices and ballot measures at an even-year election.

## **Redistricting**

If a county must establish new district boundaries following voter approval of the method for selecting commissioners, costs will increase for additional staff in election divisions, computer hardware, and software with geographic information system (GIS) and mapping capabilities, as well as associated costs to convene a redistricting commission. Costs include expenses for data gathering and analysis, community meetings, and ensuring newly drawn districts are fair and are estimated between \$75,000 and \$135,000.

## **Petition Process**

The bill also creates a new countywide petition process that requires county clerks to approve petition formats, receive petitions, and review signatures to verify if the signature threshold is met for future petitions seeking to change the voting method for county commissioners.

## Effective Date

The bill takes effect 90 days following adjournment of the General Assembly sine die, assuming no referendum petition is filed.

## State and Local Government Contacts

## Counties Secretary of State

## County Clerks