



Special Report

Commentary on Education Issues

School Election Date Changes

In May 2017, HF 566 was signed into law changing the dates of elections for school districts, community colleges and AEAs to align with local city elections. The goals for this change include increased voter turnout, effectively managing election costs through sharing among participating governmental entities and maintaining the predominantly non-partisan nature of school and city elections. In May of 2019 HF 692 was signed into law further clarifying the dates for special elections.

This law will become effective July 1, 2019. The purpose of this *Special Report* is to assist members in providing additional information and resources for navigating these changes. Districts, community colleges and AEAs would be well-advised to prepare early for the coming changes.

The legislature made additional modifications to the special election dates for school districts during the 2019 legislative session (enacted in HF 692) that impact special election dates.

Board Election Date Changes

After July 1, 2019, regular elections for school boards and community college trustees will shift from September to the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in odd-numbered years. The next few regular school elections will take place on the following dates:

- Tuesday, November 5, 2019
- Tuesday, November 2, 2021
- Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Special Election Date Changes

2019 special school election dates will be different from any other year. Because the law change does not take effect until July 1, 2019, the first half of the year will continue with the old special election dates. After July 1, the new dates take effect.

- 1st Tuesday in February, 2019
- 1st Tuesday in April, 2019
- last Tuesday in June, 2019
- 2nd Tuesday in September, 2019
- 1st Tuesday following the 1st Monday of November, 2019

After 2019, special election dates will be fully in accordance with the changes made in HF 692. During even-numbered years, special election dates will be as follows:

- 1st Tuesday in March
- 2nd Tuesday in September

In odd-numbered years, the elections will take place

- 1st Tuesday in March
- 2nd Tuesday in September
- 1st Tuesday after 1st Monday in November

Adjusted Deadlines for School Districts

One purpose of changing school election dates was to align school and city elections. Resulting from this alignment, certain filing deadlines related to school district elections have also changed in order to align with filing deadlines for city elections.

The first day to file nomination papers with the board secretary used to be no more than 64 days prior to the election. That has now changed to no more than **71** days prior to the election.

The last day to file nomination papers has also changed from not less than **40** days prior to the election, to not less than **47** days prior to the election.

The last day for candidates to withdraw, or for objections to be filed changed from not less than **35** days prior to the election, to not less than **42** days prior to the election.

Additionally, organizational meetings for school districts occur at the first regular or special meeting following the final canvass of votes, which will now take place after the election in November.

Adjusted Deadlines for Community Colleges

Community colleges can change the number of directors or boundaries for merged areas by August 1, prior to the regular school election. Following the election the county board of supervisors will meet the last Monday in November or the last regular board meeting in November to canvass the votes and certify results. The legislative changes have also built in some increased flexibility for community college boards. The organizational meeting is now the first regular meeting following the regular school election; or community colleges can choose to hold a special meeting following the election before the first regular meeting as their organizational meeting.

Adjusted Deadlines for AEAs

Filing deadlines for AEAs have changed regarding their voting process. Notice of Regular Election must be given by September 15, in the election year; and the statement of candidacy must be filed by October 15. Ballots are sent to board presidents of the school districts within the AEA by November 1. In order to be counted, ballots must be received by the AEA secretary by November 30, or postmarked by November 29 and received by the Monday following November 30. Changes to the number of directors or to district boundaries must be made by September 1, in odd-numbered years prior to director district conventions in November. The AEA organizational meeting is now the first regular meeting in December following the regular school election.

Impact on School Districts, Community Colleges and AEAs

There are both known and unknown impacts on K-12 districts, community colleges and AEAs as a result of the election date changes. County auditors serve as the commissioner of elections for their counties. If a district's boundaries cover more than one county, the county with the largest tax base is the controlling auditor. The controlling auditor certifies the names of candidates and provides the summary of public measures by the 41st day before the election. In the past, candidates wanting to hold office for both city and school board positions could not be listed on the same ballot. That was not an issue because school elections were held at different times from the city elections. This portion of the law has now been changed to allow candidates wanting to run for both city and school board positions simultaneously to be listed on the same ballot.

After July 1, 2019, election costs are split between school districts and other governmental entities. This may be a financial advantage to districts, or it may be an additional expense. This is because the controlling auditor will be responsible for establishing the polling places for elections. Some districts have previously chosen to limit the number of polling places to reduce election costs. That will no longer be an option for districts. It will be important to establish a good working relationship with the county auditor's office to share information related to past and projected election costs.

The legislative change and current Iowa law both create holdover provisions to extend the term of currently seated board members to November of the year in which their term expires. Additionally, the law allows for currently seated board officers to maintain their position until the organizational meeting following the final canvass of votes in 2019, extending their term from twelve to fourteen months.

IASB Member Resources

IASB offers a number of member resources to assist your board with this change. In response to these legislative changes IASB updated board sample board policies found in *Primer* release Vol. 26 #2, January 2018. We offer new timeline resources for candidate recruitment and education, voter education resources and board development programming for current and newly elected board members.

IASB's Annual Convention will stay in November with some exciting new changes. We'll offer a New Board Member Bootcamp session on Wednesday to help first-time board members hit the ground running; a special strand of programming Thursday; plus follow up regional workshops in January and February. Board presidents will have multiple networking opportunities at Convention. IASB will release "nuts and bolts" webinars for first-time board presidents in December and January. Regional workshops for new board members will take place in January and February; and a new full-day Board President's Conference will take place in March.

Please Note - This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information about the subject matter covered. It is furnished with the understanding that IASB is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional service. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.