

CHAPTER 205A

SCHOOL DISTRICT ELECTIONS

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205A.01 DEFINITIONS.

Subdivision 1. **Scope.** The definitions in chapter 200 and in this section apply to this chapter.

Subd. 2. **School district.** "School district" means an independent or special school district, as defined in section 120.02.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 48

205A.02 ELECTION LAW APPLICABLE.

Except as provided in this chapter, the Minnesota election law applies to school district elections, as far as practicable. Elections in common school districts shall be governed by section 123.11.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 49

205A.03 PRIMARY ELECTIONS.

Subdivision 1. **Resolution.** The school board of a school district may, by resolution adopted at least 12 weeks before the next school district general election, decide to choose nominees for school district elective offices by a primary as provided in subdivisions 1 to 6. The resolution, when adopted, is effective for all ensuing elections of board members in that school district until it is revoked.

Subd. 2. **Date.** The school district primary must be held at a time designated by the school board in the resolution adopting the primary system, but no later than six weeks before the school district general election. The clerk shall give notice of the primary in the manner provided in section 205A.07.

Subd. 3. **Candidates, filing.** The clerk shall place upon the primary ballot without partisan designation the names of individuals whose candidacies have been filed and for whom the proper filing fee has been paid. When not more than twice the number of individuals to be elected to a school district elective office file for nomination for the office, their names must not be placed upon the primary ballot and must be placed on the school district general election ballot as the nominees for that office.

Subd. 4. **Results.** The school district primary must be conducted and the returns made in the manner provided for the state primary as far as practicable. Within two days after the primary, the school board of the school district shall canvass the returns, and the two candidates for each office who receive the highest number of votes, or a number of candidates equal to twice the number of individuals to be elected to the office who receive the highest number of votes, are the nominees for the office named. Their names must be certified to the school district clerk who shall place them on the school district general election ballot without partisan designation and without payment of an additional fee.

Subd. 5. **Recount.** A losing candidate at the school district primary may request a recount of the votes for that nomination subject to section 204C.36.

Subd. 6. **Vacancy in nomination.** When a vacancy occurs in a nomination made at a school district primary, the vacancy must be filled in the manner provided in section 204B.13.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 50

205A.04 GENERAL ELECTION.

Except as may be provided in a special law or charter provision to the contrary, the general election in each school district must be held on the third Tuesday in May, unless the school board provides by resolution for holding the school district general election on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. When the time of a school district's general election is changed from May to November, the terms of all board members shall be lengthened to expire on January 1; when the time of a school district's general election is changed from November to May, the terms of all board members shall be shortened to expire on July 1. Whenever the time of a school district election is changed, the school district clerk shall immediately notify in writing the county auditor or auditors of the counties in which the school district is located and the secretary of state of the change of date.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 51

205A.05 SPECIAL ELECTIONS.

Subdivision 1. Questions. Special elections must be held for a school district on a question on which the voters are authorized by law to pass judgment. The school board may on its own motion call a special election to vote on any matter requiring approval of the voters of a district. Upon petition of 50 or more voters of the school district or five percent of the number of voters voting at the preceding regular school district election, the school board shall by resolution call a special election to vote on any matter requiring approval of the voters of a district. A question is carried only with the majority in its favor required by law. The election officials for a special election are the same as for the most recent school district general election unless changed according to law. Otherwise, special elections must be conducted and the returns made in the manner provided for the school district general election. A special election may not be held during the 20 days before and the 30 days after any regularly scheduled statewide election or election of a municipality wholly or partially within the school district.

Subd. 2. Vacancies in school district offices. Special elections shall be held in school districts in conjunction with school district primary and general elections to fill vacancies in elective school district offices.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 52

205A.06 CANDIDATES, FILING.

Subdivision 1. Affidavit of candidacy. Not more than ten nor less than eight weeks before a school district primary, or before the school district general election if there is no school district primary, an individual who is eligible and desires to become a candidate for an office to be voted on at the election must file an affidavit of candidacy with the school district clerk. The affidavit must be in substantially the same form as that in section 204B.06, subdivision 1. The school district clerk shall also accept an application signed by at least five voters and filed on behalf of an eligible voter in the school district whom they desire to be a candidate, if service of a copy of the application has been made on the candidate and proof of service is endorsed on the application being filed. No individual shall be nominated by nominating petition for a school district elective office except in the event of a vacancy in nomination as provided in section 205A.03, subdivision 6. Upon receipt of the proper filing fee, the clerk shall place the name of the candidate on the official ballot without partisan designation.

Subd. 2. Notice of filing dates. At least two weeks before the first day to file affidavits of candidacy, the school district clerk shall publish a notice in the official newspaper stating the first and last dates on which affidavits of candidacy may be filed in the clerk's office and the closing time for filing on the last day for filing. The clerk shall post a similar notice in the administrative offices of the school district at least ten days before the first day to file affidavits of candidacy.

Subd. 3. Filing fees. The filing fee for a school district office is \$2.

Subd. 4. Petition in place of fees. A candidate for school district office may file a petition in place of the filing fees in subdivision 3. The petition must meet the requirements of section 204B.11, subdivision 2.

Subd. 5. Withdrawal. A candidate for a school district elective office may withdraw from the election by filing an affidavit of withdrawal with the school district clerk by 12:00 noon of the day after the last day for filing affidavits of candidacy. After that date, no candidate may file an affidavit of withdrawal.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 53

205A.07 NOTICE.

Subdivision 1. Publication and posting. The clerk of a school district shall give two weeks' published notice and give ten days' posted notice of a school district primary, general, or special election, stating the time of the election, the location of each polling place, the offices to be filled, and all propositions or questions to be voted upon at the primary, general, or special election. The notice shall be posted in the administrative offices of the school district for public inspection.

Subd. 2. Sample ballot, posting. For every school district primary, general, or special election, the school district clerk shall at least four days before the primary, general, or special election, post a sample ballot in the administrative offices of the school district for public inspection, and shall post a sample ballot in each polling place on election day.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 54

205A.08 BALLOTS.

Subdivision 1. Buff ballot. The names of all candidates for offices to be voted on at a school district general election must be placed on a single ballot printed on buff paper and known as the "buff ballot."

Subd. 2. Primary ballots. The school district primary ballot must conform as far as practicable with the school district general election ballot except that no blank spaces may be provided for writing in the names of candidates.

Subd. 3. Vacancies. The names of candidates to fill vacancies at a school district special election held in conjunction with the primary or general election must be placed on the school district primary and general election ballots. The names of candidates to fill a vacancy in the office of school board member in a school district must be listed under the separate heading "Special election for school board member to fill vacancy in term expiring, " with the date of expiration of the term and any other information necessary to distinguish the office.

Subd. 4. Goldenrod ballots; questions. All questions relating to a proposition for the issuance of bonds, and all other questions relating to school district affairs submitted at an election to the voters of the school district, shall be printed on one separate goldenrod ballot and shall be prepared, printed, and distributed under the direction of the school district clerk at the same time and in the same manner as other school district ballots. The ballots, when voted, shall be deposited in a separate goldenrod ballot box provided by the local authorities for each voting precinct. The ballots shall be canvassed, counted, and returned in the same manner as other school district ballots. The returns shall provide appropriate blank spaces for the counting, canvassing, and return of the results of the questions submitted on the goldenrod ballot.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 55

205A.09 VOTING HOURS.

Subdivision 1. Metropolitan area school districts. At a school district election in a school district located in whole or in part within a metropolitan county as defined by section 473.121, the school board, by resolution adopted before giving notice of the election, may designate the time during which the polling places will remain open for voting at the next succeeding and all later school district elections. The polling places

must open no later than 10:00 a.m. and close no earlier than 8:00 p.m. The resolution shall remain in force until it is revoked by the school board.

Subd. 2. Other school districts. At a school district election in a school district other than one described in subdivision 1, the school board, by resolution adopted before giving notice of the election, may designate the time, in no event less than three hours, during which the polling places will remain open for voting at the next succeeding and all later school district general elections. The resolution must remain in force until it is revoked by the school board or changed because of request by voters as provided in this subdivision. If a petition requesting longer voting hours, signed by a number of voters equal to 20 percent of the votes cast at the last school district election, is presented to the school district clerk no later than 30 days before a school district election, then the polling places for that election must open at 10:00 a.m. and close at 8:00 p.m. The school district clerk must give ten days' published notice and posted notice of the changed voting hours and notify appropriate county auditors of the change. School districts covered by this subdivision must certify their election hours to the county auditor in January of each year.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 56

205A.10 PROCEDURE.

Subdivision 1. Materials, ballots. The school district clerk shall prepare and have printed the necessary election materials, including ballots, for a school district election. The name of each candidate for office shall be rotated with the names of the other candidates for the same office so that the name of each candidate appears substantially an equal number of times at the top, at the bottom, and at each intermediate place in the group of candidates for that office.

Subd. 2. Election, conduct. A school district election must be by secret ballot and must be held and the returns made in the manner provided for the state general election, as far as practicable. The vote totals from an absentee ballot counting board established pursuant to section 203B.13 may be tabulated and reported by the school district as a whole rather than by precinct. For school district elections not held in conjunction with a statewide election, the school board shall appoint election judges as provided in section 204B.21, subdivision 2.

Subd. 3. Canvass of returns, certificate of election, ballots, disposition. Within two days after a school district election, the school board shall canvass the returns and declare the results of the election. After the time for contesting elections has passed, the school district clerk shall issue a certificate of election to each successful candidate. If there is a contest, the certificate of election to that office must not be issued until the outcome of the contest has been determined by the proper court. If there is a tie vote, the school board shall determine the result by lot. The clerk shall deliver the certificate of election to the successful candidate by personal service or certified mail. The successful candidate shall file an acceptance and oath of office in writing with the clerk within 30 days of the date of mailing or personal service. A person who fails to qualify prior to the time specified shall be deemed to have refused to serve, but that filing may be made at any time before action to fill the vacancy has been taken. The school district clerk shall certify the results of the election to the county auditor, and the clerk shall be the final custodian of the ballots and the returns of the election.

Subd. 4. Recount. A losing candidate at a school district election may request a recount of the votes for that office subject to the requirements of section 204C.36.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 57

205A.11 PRECINCTS; POLLING PLACES.

The precincts and polling places for school district elections are those precincts or parts of precincts and polling places set in sections 204B.14 to 204B.16, except that at a school district election not held on the day of a statewide election, the school board may combine several precincts into a single precinct with one polling place and one set

of election judges. The school board shall establish combined precincts by resolution at least 30 days before an election, post a map of the combined precincts, and file a copy of the map and resolution with the county auditor.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 58

205A.12 SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION DISTRICTS.

Subdivision 1. General provisions. Any independent school district may alter its organization into separate election districts for the purpose of election of board members by following the procedures in this section.

Subd. 2. Election. Except in a school district located wholly or partly within a city of the first class, upon resolution of the board, made on its own motion or on presentation of a petition substantially in the form required in section 205A.13, signed by at least 50 electors of the district or ten percent of the number of votes cast in the most recent regular school board election, whichever is larger, the board shall adopt a proposal to divide the district into as many separate election districts as there are members of the board, which proposal must be submitted to an election under this chapter. If the election is initiated by petition, the resolution calling the election must be adopted within six months after the date of receipt of the petition. Only one election within any two-year period may be held under this section.

Subd. 3. Ballot question. The question presented at the special election shall be: "Shall the school district be reorganized into election districts with boundaries as established in Resolution No. of the school board, dated?"

Yes

No"

Subd. 4. Election district boundaries. Each proposed election district must be as equal in population as practicable and must be composed of compact, contiguous territory. The district may utilize the most recent federal decennial census figures available or may conduct a special census for this purpose. The board shall designate each election district by number.

Subd. 5. Board elections. If the proposal for the establishment of election districts is approved by the voters, the board shall specify the election districts from which vacancies shall be filled as they occur until such time as each board member represents an election district. A candidate for school board in a subsequent election must file an affidavit of candidacy to be elected as a school board member for the election district in which the candidate resides. One and only one member of the board shall be elected from each election district. Each board member must be a resident of the election district for which elected but the creation of an election district or a change in election district boundaries shall not disqualify a board member from serving for the remainder of a term.

Subd. 6. Redefining election district boundaries. The school board may by resolution redefine district boundaries after a school district general election. The board shall hold a public hearing on the proposed resolution before its adoption. One week's published notice of the hearing must be given. Within six months after the official certification of each federal decennial or special census, the school board shall either confirm the existing election district boundaries as conforming to the standards of subdivision 4 or redefine election district boundaries to conform to those standards. If the school board fails to take either action within the time required, no further compensation may be paid to the school board members until the districts are either reconfirmed or redefined as required by this section. A resolution establishing original or new election district boundaries shall apply to the first election held at least six months after adoption of the resolution.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 59

205A.13 REQUIREMENTS FOR PETITIONS.

Any petition to a school board authorized in this chapter or sections 124A.03 and

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275.125, or any other law which requires the board to submit an issue to referendum or election, shall meet the following requirements to be valid.

(1) Each page of the petition shall contain a heading at its top which specifies the particular action the board is being petitioned to take. The signatures on any page which does not contain such a heading shall all be invalidated. All pages of the petition shall be assembled and filed with the board as a single instrument.

(2) Each page of the petition shall contain an authentication signed by the circulator of the petition specifying as follows:

"I personally have circulated this page of the petition. All signatures were made in my presence. I believe that the signers signed their own names and that each person who has signed is eligible to vote in a school district election according to Minnesota election law.

Signed: Signature of Petition Circulator

Date:"

The signatures on any page which does not contain such an authentication shall all be invalidated.

(3) Signers of the petition shall personally sign their own names in ink or indelible pencil and shall indicate after the name the place of residence by street and number, or other description sufficient to identify the place. Except as provided in clause (4), any signature which does not meet these requirements shall be invalidated.

(4) Individuals who are unable to write their names shall be required to make their marks on the petition. The circulator of the petition shall certify the mark by signing the individual's name and address and shall thereafter print the phrase "mark certified by petition circulator."

(5) A petition, to be valid, must contain the minimum number of valid signatures of eligible voters specified in the law authorizing the petition and election.

History: 1987 c 266 art 1 s 60