



Voting Study

Final Report to the Legislature

Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State

June 30, 2025

Report Required by Minnesota Laws, Chapter 62, Article 4, Section 136,
Subdivision 4.

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I. Cost of Report Preparation

The total cost incurred by the Office of Secretary of State (OSS) in compiling this report was approximately \$3,414.00. Most of the costs involved staff time to compile and analyze data and prepare the written report and research conversations with stakeholders both in Minnesota and other states regarding other states' comprehensive voter guides/pamphlets. These costs represent only those costs associated with the Final Report, and do not include those costs associated with the completion of the Interim Report.

Estimated costs are provided pursuant to Minn. Stat. 3.197, requiring the cost for preparing a report to the Legislature at the beginning of the report.

II. Introduction

In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature mandated the creation of a report by the Office of the Secretary of State (OSS) to identify, “findings related to voter-facing issues, voter engagement and education, and technical aspects of implementing ranked choice voting.”

The legislation required an Interim Report and a Final Report. For the Interim report, due February 1, 2025, OSS commissioned the Management Analysis and Development (MAD) division of Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) to conduct a study to explore many of the above required findings. That Interim Report entitled “Voter Engagement, Education, and Improvements” is also referred to in this report as “the voter study.” This document serves as the Final Report. The Final Report will overview key findings identified in the voter study and outline OSS recommendations to the Legislature based on these findings.

III. Enabling Legislation

The Enabling Legislation for this report can be found in Minnesota Laws, Chapter 62, Article 4, Section 136, Subdivision 4. Chapter 62 can be seen [here](#) and the law text is included below.

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Sec. 136. **SECRETARY OF STATE VOTING STUDY.**

Subdivision 1. Study requirements. (a) The secretary of state must conduct a study of issues related to voter engagement, education, and improvements to the election system, which can include but is not limited to assessing ranked choice voting. In conducting the study the secretary of state must consult, at a minimum:

(1) officials with experience administering elections in counties, cities, and towns, including those in the seven-county metropolitan area and those outside of the seven-county metropolitan area, and may include those with experience implementing ranked choice voting;

(2) members of each of the following:

(i) the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs;

(ii) the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage;

(iii) the Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans;

(iv) the Indian Affairs Council; and

(v) the Council on LGBTQIA2S+ Minnesotans;

(3) organizations that represent individuals with disabilities, including the Minnesota Council on Disability and the Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing;

(4) organizations that represent new Americans; seniors; low-income individuals; Black, Indigenous, or people of color; and residents of greater Minnesota;

(5) community organizations with demonstrated experience and interest in voting methods and elections administration; and

(6) the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over state government finance and elections finance and policy.

(b) In addition to the consultation required by paragraph (a), the secretary of state must provide opportunities for public input and comment, which may include facilitated listening sessions, town hall meetings, or other similar methods of community engagement.

Subd. 2. **Elections officials and administrators.** The study must review existing elections systems and procedures and their compatibility with the topics of the study. The secretary must prioritize consultation with officials with experience implementing elections in counties, cities, and towns, as identified in subdivision 1, paragraph (a), clause (1).

Subd. 3. **Community input and engagement.** The study must review impacts of any election systems changes on the experience of voters, including impacts on historically underserved communities and the communities identified in subdivision 1, paragraph (a), clause (4). The secretary of state must prioritize consultation with the communities and groups identified in subdivision 1, paragraph (a), clauses (2) to (4), and must provide opportunities for public input as required by subdivision 1, paragraph (b).

Subd. 4. **Report.** The secretary of state must provide an interim report and a final report describing the secretary's work to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over state government finance and elections policy and finance. The reports must include:

(1) findings related to voter-facing issues, voter engagement and education, and technical aspects of implementing ranked choice voting; and

(2) draft legislation, if any, to supplement the study's findings.

Subd. 5. **Completion of report.** The interim report required by subdivision 4 must be submitted no later than February 1, 2025. The final report required by subdivision 4 must be submitted no later than June 30, 2025.

IV. Summary of Voter Study Results

OSS commissioned the Management Analysis and Development (MAD) division of Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) to conduct a study on voter-facing issues and voter engagement and education that serves as the interim report required by the enabling legislation outlined in Section III of this report. This final report will summarize the findings of the voter study and will focus primarily on OSS's recommendations to the Legislature as a result of the findings identified in the voter study conducted by MAD.

a. Voter Study Community Input and Engagement

OSS worked with MAD to ensure that outreach was made to the required communities identified in the enabling statutory language. Outreach was accomplished through two primary mechanisms. First, MAD conducted two surveys, the first targeting voters, organizations that serve voters, and organization serving or representing the targeted communities identified in the enabling legislation. The second survey targeted elections administrators at the county and municipal levels.

For the election administrator survey, the OSS distributed the survey directly to election administrators in Minnesota, and 132 election administrators responded to the survey.

For the survey targeting voters, MAD distributed a survey link and QR code on April 15, 2024, to "more than 356 organizations representing Minnesota's ethnic councils, organizations representing LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, individuals with disabilities, new Americans, seniors, people living in poverty, people of color and Indigenous people, Greater Minnesotans, community organizations with interest and experience in voting methods and elections, and members of legislative committees with jurisdiction over state elections." (Interim Report p.6). Organizations representing these communities were identified through current OSS voter outreach partners, through MAD contacts, as well as through outreach personally undertaken by Secretary Simon with dozens of legislators, of both chambers and both parties, who represented populations that were identified in the statutory enabling language.

The OSS also sent the survey link and QR code to all OSS voter outreach partners. All organizations receiving the survey link and QR code were encouraged to share the survey with their membership. The survey contained questions on demographic information to allow the OSS and MAD to assess how representative the survey responses were in relation to the demographics of the state as a whole. At the time the survey was set to close on April 26, 2024, the survey responses received had disproportionate participation by female voters over the age

of 65, and under-participation by voters of color and youth voters. In consultation with MAD, the OSS approved extending the survey through May 6, 2024, to attempt to gather additional responses. The OSS sent reminder emails and engaged in targeted outreach to organizations representing and working with those communities that were underrepresented in the survey responses.

Ultimately, the voter survey collected 1,321 responses from individuals. Full demographic information can be found in the voter study report, but more than 41.7% of survey respondents were 66 years of age or older, 63.8% identified as women, 83.9% listed their race/ethnic identity as white, and 83.2% indicated they owned their own home. Only 1.2% indicated they were non-voters. In contrast, according to the Minnesota State Demographer's Office¹, only about 16% of Minnesotans are over the age of 65, just over 78% of Minnesota's population identifies as white, and 72% of Minnesotans own their home². In the last statewide general election, nearly 24% of Minnesotans who are eligible to vote did not vote.

Because of the challenges in getting a representative sample in the survey, significant effort was made to ensure that groups representing and serving the statutorily identified communities were represented in the facilitated discussions conducted by MAD. MAD and OSS contacted more than 90 organizations, 45 election administrators, and over 220 individual survey respondents who indicated their interest in participating in focus group discussions. Ultimately, forty-two individuals participated in eight voter focus groups. The individuals who chose to participate represented civic and election organizations, regional development commissions and corporations in Greater Minnesota, organizations serving older adults, organizations serving immigrants, people with disabilities, young people, Asian Americans, religious organizations, state agencies that may have a nexus with elections, legislators identified in the enabling legislation, and current and former election judges. The full list of organizations participating in the focus groups can be found in Appendix D of the voter study.

b. Voter Study Recommendations

Based on the focus groups, MAD made several recommendations for improvements to the voting system. The full recommendations and analysis from the focus groups are outlined in the voter study, but the key recommendations from MAD at the conclusion of the voter study were the following:

- **More and better candidate information:** OSS should work to educate candidates running for political office about the importance of providing information that voters can access easily. OSS could explore partnerships with nonpartisan community organizations or other groups to help provide information on candidates and issues, if only to provide

¹

https://mn.gov/admin/assets/Characteristic%20Distributions%20of%20the%20Population%20in%20Minnesota_final_051524%20report_tcm36-608255.pdf

² https://mn.gov/admin/assets/MN_HomeownershipReport_final_3.3.2025_tcm36-671952.pdf

background assistance for those efforts. Survey respondents and group discussion participants pointed to states such as California and Colorado that mail printed voter guides to every household in the state as an example OSS could follow.

- **Education about elections:** OSS should increase education efforts about the election process in Minnesota to ensure voters know how and where to vote. Many survey respondents and group discussion participants said this education can and should start in schools, before students are even eligible to vote. Education efforts should also address current and potential voters who may be unfamiliar with where they need to go to vote, what is on their ballots, and how to vote via absentee ballot, early in-person voting, and other methods. OSS should take every opportunity to simplify and clarify instructions about voting processes.
- **Transparency and election security:** OSS should expand its efforts to communicate what Minnesota does to ensure safe and secure elections. Many survey and group discussion participants had served as election judges and said that experience helped them see that votes are counted properly and elections in Minnesota are secure. While total transparency may not be possible, many survey respondents and group discussion participants believe OSS could do more to explain how the measures used in Minnesota ensure safe and secure elections.
- **Increase accessibility and language access:** While recent changes in legislation have been aimed at expanding language access for voters whose native language is not English, OSS should continue to work to expand those efforts, as well as working to ensure polling places are accessible for voters who have a disability or experience mobility and other issues that may make navigating a polling place difficult.

V. OSS Review of Voter Study and Recommendations

Following the completion of the voter study by MAD, the OSS began the process of developing legislative recommendations as required by the enabling legislation. In addition to the information provided in the voter study, the OSS incorporated feedback from election administrators and voter-facing organizations gathered during Secretary Simon's travels throughout the state, and through recommendations coming to the OSS through the voter outreach and government relations teams. The OSS also engaged in research and outreach to other states to gather information on what other states have done to address some of the issues identified, and how effective those improvements have been in improving voter experience and participation.

The OSS then prepared a list of proposed recommendations for review. Prior to finalizing the list of recommendations, the OSS conducted two additional focus groups via Microsoft Teams to review and provide input on the anticipated final report recommendations. The organizations that sent representatives to these meetings were:

- League of Women Voters of MN (2 reps)
- Clean Elections MN
- Common Cause MN (2 reps, one appeared on multiple calls)
- Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs (MCLA)
- Lutheran Social Service MN
- FairVote MN
- MN Indian Affairs Council (MCIA) (2 reps)
- Future of Us (f.k.a. Asian American Organizing Project) (3 reps)
- CAPI Northwest MN
- MN Council on Disability
- ACLU MN
- Voices for Racial Justice
- MN Council of Nonprofits

These organizations provided feedback on the recommendations, and the OSS has strived to incorporate that feedback into this report.

If any other organizations have additional recommendations, or if the OSS in its outreach identifies additional improvements, the OSS is committed to reviewing and considering all feedback on how to improve Minnesota’s voting system. Additional recommendations for legislative improvements, as appropriate, will be brought to the legislature in the form of either a supplement to this report or in a legislative recommendation.

This report includes recommendations based on the information gathered in the voter study, through OSS engagement, and through research. The OSS appreciates the participation of all of the individuals and organizations in the formation of this report and acknowledges that the work of improving Minnesota’s voting system will continue and will expand beyond the recommendations contained in this report.

VI. Findings and Recommendations

a. General Voter Education

Minnesota has maintained consistently high voter turnout compared to other states in the nation. In the 2024 Presidential Election, Minnesota achieved #1 youth voter turnout of all states, and #2 general voter turnout, just 0.2% shy of Wisconsin. However, like other areas such as housing and education, data has shown that there are voter participation gaps in Minnesota across several demographics.³ While Minnesota’s voting system is often ranked as one of the

³ See, e.g., <https://www.mncompass.org/chart/k180/voter-turnout-0#1-13688-g>

best in the nation, there are many areas where Minnesota's voting system could be improved upon.

The voter study results show that there is a continuing need to educate voters, future voters, and would-be voters about Minnesota's elections system. For example, some voters asked for security measures that are already a part of Minnesota's election system, reflecting a lack of understanding about how the system works and the protections already in place. Examples of items elevated in the voter study that people wanted to see in Minnesota's system included paper ballots, absentee ballot security measures including ID-number matching to the absentee ballot request form, and direct balloting opportunities for voters who prefer this method over absentee voting. All of these are already in place in Minnesota, but survey respondents' intent to have these features added to Minnesota's system indicate a need to educate voters on what is already in place.

Voters also expressed a desire to better understand how Minnesota's election system is safe and secure. The vast majority of voter participants believe that Minnesota's elections system is safe and secure. But voter study participants would like to see OSS explain better exactly *how* our election safety and security measures protect their vote.

Voter advocacy organization representatives agreed with this recommendation and expressed support for a legislative support of an ongoing voter education campaign by OSS, in partnership with trusted community voices. There was not agreement among representatives around the preferred recipients and mechanism of a legislative appropriation among the stated options of: direct appropriation to OSS, competitive grant process, and statutorily named grant recipients. However, there was general agreement that this education would be most effective if it came from trusted messengers within the community. The OSS believes that a combination of funds towards OSS's ongoing voter outreach operations and a competitive grant program for nonprofits who focus on voter outreach work would be an effective combination that would assist in pushing Minnesota's voter turnout rate higher and providing better information to voters about both voting methods and safeguards currently in Minnesota's voting system.

b. Comprehensive Voter Guide

The most consistent and frequently named barrier to voting in the voter study was lack of information about candidates, particularly judicial and local candidates. Currently, the OSS collects campaign website information during the candidate filing period. The OSS then posts these links on our candidate filing site as well as on the [My Ballot tool](#) that allows voters to look up the contests and questions that will be on their ballot. However, these links are only provided to voters through these tools if the website was provided by the candidate, usually at candidate filing. While these links allow voters to hear the candidates in their own words, this process has some deficiencies. For example, candidates often do not provide their campaign website when filing, sometimes their sites are not functional, or the webpages themselves don't describe the office the candidate seeks. In addition, voters are not always using these

tools readily, either because they are unaware of them or because they are required to sift through many pages of candidate websites to find basic information about the candidates or the nature of the offices they seek.

Individuals in the voter study, as well as feedback from voter outreach partners and constituent groups engaged with the OSS, report a greater need for trustworthy, nonpartisan information on candidates. This section will explore in detail the possibility a comprehensive voter guide (known in many states as a voter pamphlet) to help address this issue. While a majority of other states offer some form of voter guide, the content and method of distribution vary widely. This report will compare the pros, cons, and costs of an online-only voter guide versus a mailed and printed voter guide, as well as the types of content contained within various voter guides.

A majority of states offer some form of publicly funded voter guide prior to even-year state general elections. In the United States, 33 states offer a voter guide, while 17 states, including Minnesota, do not. Of the 33 states that do offer a guide:

- All state voter guides provide general information to voters on their state's election system, including how to vote. Some states also provide specific information on security and safety measures within the voting system.
- 27 states offer an online-only voter guide as a PDF or a navigable website, or both.
- 6 states offer an online voter guide, plus a mailed and printed voter guide.
 - 4 of these states mail one guide to every household with registered voters
 - 2 of these states mail one guide to every household in the state regardless of registered voter status
- 10 states offer voter guides that include information about candidates for various offices, including statements written by the candidates
- 16 states offer voter guides that include information about proposed ballot questions or constitutional amendments

A comprehensive voter guide would work towards addressing much of the feedback in the voter study. A voter guide would:

- Provide more and better information about candidates to voters
- Enhance general voter education efforts (about Minnesota's election system, important election dates, how to vote, how to make a vote plan, etc.)
- Clarify how to vote via absentee ballot versus on election day
- Serve as a comprehensive document providing both information about candidates and information for voters about Minnesota's elections system

1. Examples of Online-only Voter Guides

Some states that employ comprehensive, online-only voter guides include [Connecticut](#), [Hawaii](#) and [Utah](#). Each state employs a slightly different approach in terms of what content is included and what is not. Below are summaries of these three examples of online-only voter guides and some of considerations that go into the production of these states' guides.

Connecticut

The [Connecticut voter guide](#) is produced by the Office of the Secretary of the State of Connecticut (CT-SOS). It includes important general voter information and a list of candidates. It is 45 pages long. The guide notably does not include candidate statements or answers to biographical questions about candidates like most state voter guides. It serves instead mainly as a reference list of candidates. Most candidates are included in the state voter guide, including President/Vice President, Congressional, statewide constitutional, State Senate and State House. Judicial and local candidates and ballot measures are not included in the guide. While the guide lacks candidate statements, it serves as an important starting point for voters in identifying candidates on their ballot for many offices. The production of the guide is funded by the CT-SOS's general appropriation and does not have a unique appropriation for the production of the guide.

Hawaii

The [Hawaii voter guide](#) is produced by the Hawaii Office of Elections which sits in the Office of the Lt. Governor of Hawaii (HOE). Hawaii does not have a Secretary of State. The guide includes important general voter information and candidate statements for President/Vice President, congressional, statewide constitutional offices, statewide Office of Hawaiian Affairs, State Senate, State House, county mayor, and county council. It also includes proposed state constitutional amendments, county charter amendments, and city charter amendments (for Honolulu only). It is 91 pages long.

The 2024 election cycle was the first election cycle for the Hawaii Voter Guide. When the enabling language was being debated at the Hawaii Legislature, a compromise was struck between legislative leaders—who sought a printed and mailed guide to every household in Hawaii—and the HOE, who sought an online-only guide without printed options. This compromise was to produce the voter guide as a primarily online product but also utilize bulk-printed copies in public spaces, including the state's library system, and public buildings and facilities across Hawaii.

The online-only guide saw limited usage by the public—the primary and general election voter guides (separate guides for each election) saw approximately 20,000 online clicks each. Hawaii has 839,618 registered voters and a population of 1,446,146. Hawaii's relatively recent experience with the legislative debate on production of a voter guide provides Minnesota with a window into what this debate might look like in the Minnesota Legislature, with issues around

cost, printed and mailed versus online-only, language access, and access to marginalized and isolated communities, including but not limited to, Native Americans.

Utah

The [Utah Voter Information Pamphlet](#) (VIP) is produced by the Utah Elections Office which sits within the Office of the Lt. Governor. Utah does not have a Secretary of State. The VIP includes general voter information, a list of Presidential/Vice Presidential candidates without statements, plus candidate statements for Congressional and statewide candidates, a list of legislative candidates without statements, constitutional amendment proposals and arguments, judicial retention election information including biography with a focus on job performance, plus judicial peer evaluations. Judicial information is provided by a separate body called the Utah Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission (JPEC).

The VIP in total is 141 pages long. Prior to the 2024 cycle, Utah sent out a printed and mailed the VIP to every household, similar to many other western states. At the request of the Lt. Governor's Office to reduce costs, the Utah Legislature modified the enabling statute to move from a printed and mailed pamphlet to an online-only pamphlet. The 2024 election cycle was the first election cycle that Utah utilized the online-only pamphlet. Utah Elections staff shared with the OSS that while the 2024 VIP was certainly utilized well in its new format, the expectations of many voters remained for a printed and mailed Voter Information Pamphlet. The online-only Voter Information Pamphlet saw higher candidate participation in terms of candidate statements listed than the printed and mailed guide. The cost of the project was not provided. Utah has 1,758,738 registered voters and a total population of 3,503,613.

2. Examples of Printed and Mailed Voter Guides

Some states utilize the U.S. Postal Service to send printed voter guides to a majority of the electorate or of the state's population. Distribution varies by state. Some states distribute to households with registered voters only, while other states distribute to all households in the state regardless of voter registration status.

Examples of successfully implemented printed and mailed comprehensive voter guides include Arizona, Oregon, and Washington State.

Arizona

[Arizona's Voter Education Guide](#) is compiled by the Arizona Citizen Clean Elections Commission (AZ-CCEC), a body whose creation was authorized by the citizens of Arizona in 1998. The Commission has a combined mission of voter education, campaign finance enforcement, and public financing for campaigns. The AZ-CCEC produces a voter guide with a surprising combination of specificity for the voter. The guide is mailed to every household with at least one registered voter. In total, 31 issues of the guide are produced and distributed; 30 for each

of the state's 30 Senate districts, and one combined issue with all legislative candidates, intended primarily for UOCAVA voters. All issues are also available online in PDF format.

For the 2024 general election, over 2.4 million copies of the AZ-CCEC voter guide were distributed to households containing more than 4,367,593 registered voters in Arizona (out of an overall state population of 7,582,384). The 2.4 million copies distributed do not include additional copies that were distributed in bulk both directly by candidates and at public locations.

Statewide and legislative candidates are included in the guide. According to AZ-CCEC staff, the guide is ubiquitous amongst candidates and voters: the candidate participation rate in the guide is 99%. An AZ-CCEC lead staff member recounted a time when a candidate testified before an Arizona legislative committee that, if a candidate is not in the guide, "they are not winning their election." The AZ-CCEC was able to achieve all of this for a cost of \$1,881,659.48 for the 2024 General Election Guide. This includes print and mail costs and the addition of an "I Voted" sticker. The Arizona voter education guide provides a strong value proposition to the Arizona voter; balancing the candidate information provided to voters and the low cost-per-unit.

Oregon

The [Oregon Voters' Pamphlet](#) is compiled by the Oregon Secretary of State's Office (OR-SOS). Oregon distributes their voter pamphlet to every household in the state regardless of voter registration status. While this increases the cost of the project, it has the added benefit of reaching citizens who are not registered voters. The pamphlet is made in 19 editions—by county—with some smaller counties sharing an issue. Each pamphlet issue covers from one to up to six of the 36 counties in Oregon. All issues are available online in PDF format. All issues are translated into several non-English languages.

Over 1,917,188 copies of the pamphlet were distributed by mail to all households in Oregon. There are 3,042,302 registered voters in Oregon, with a total state population of 4,272,371.

Most candidates are included in the state pamphlet: President/VP, congressional, statewide constitutional offices, State Senate, State House, judicial, and ballot measures. For local contests, 13 of the 36 counties in Oregon produce their own county voter pamphlet for local candidates. Of these 13, 12 are distributed together with the state voter pamphlet and one is distributed independently.

Because Oregon is a vote-by-mail state, the pamphlet is an integral part of the voting culture in Oregon. OR-SOS shared that voters provide mostly positive feedback on the pamphlet. In fact, OR-SOS reported voters are sometimes upset or frustrated when a candidate that they support did not take the proactive steps to be included in the guide. Filing to run for office with OR-SOS is not a prerequisite for inclusion within the voter pamphlet: fees to file for office and fees to be included in the voter pamphlet are separate fees paid at different times to OR-SOS. A combined

filing and voter pamphlet info collection process was suggested by OR-SOS to streamline the process.

The total cost for the project for the 2024 General Election Pamphlet was \$1,514,677.56, including printing and mailing costs, but not other costs, such as dedicated staff or translation services. The Oregon Voters' Pamphlet provides a strong value proposition for Oregon voters.

Washington

The [Washington State Voters' Pamphlet](#) is compiled by the Washington Secretary of State's Office (WA-SOS). Washington and Oregon share similarities in their voter guides, as in their voting cultures. Like Oregon, Washington distributes its voter pamphlet by mail to every household in the state regardless of voter registration status. The pamphlet is made in 27 editions – by county or partial county area – with some smaller counties sharing an issue. Three of these editions cover parts of King County, the state's largest county by population. Additional issues for both King County and statewide are translated into Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese. Two other county editions are bilingual, featuring English and Spanish.

Over 3,360,851 copies of the pamphlet were distributed by mail to all households in Washington. There are 5,018,772 registered voters in Washington, with a total state population of 7,958,180. Most candidates are included in the state pamphlet: President/VP, congressional, statewide constitutional officers, State Senate, State House, judicial, and ballot measures. Some counties in Washington produce supplemental guides for local candidates for office. Counties are reimbursed in full by the state for the production of these local pamphlets. This is a recent legislative development; previously, there was a cost-sharing formula for the local pamphlets.

Because Washington, like Oregon, is a primarily vote-by-mail state, the pamphlet is an integral part of the voting culture. WA-SOS shared that voters provide overwhelmingly positive feedback on the pamphlet. The total cost for the project for the 2024 General Election Pamphlet was \$2,673,863.16, including printing and mailing costs, but not other costs, such as dedicated staff or translation services. The Washington Voters' Pamphlet provides a strong value proposition for Washington voters.

3. Comparison of Online-only vs. Printed and Mailed Guides

	AZ	OR	WA	CT*	HI*	UT*
Distribution #	2,400,000+	1,917,188+	3,360,851	Online*	Online*	Online*
Distribution method:	Mailed; RV household, no common last name & Online	Mailed; 1/each household all state & Online	Mailed; 1/each household all state & Online	Online*	Online* plus bulk distribution in public buildings (libraries, election offices) 2024 new	Online* formerly mailed, 2024 first Online only election cycle
Est. Cost to State & taxpayer (2024) w/o staffing	\$1.88 M	\$1.52 M	\$2.67 M	Not provided/ no unique appropriation	\$170 K	Not provided/ no unique appropriation
Candidates included	Statewide, legislative (county candidates maybe added soon)	Pres/VP, Congress, statewide, legislative, judicial, ballot measures	Pres/VP, Congress, statewide, legislative, judicial, ballot measures	Pres/VP, Congress, legislative (lists only, no candidate statements)	Pres/VP, Congress, statewide, legislative, ballot questions	Congress, statewide, legislative, judicial, ballot questions
Value proposition	High	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium

The above chart shows a summarized comparison of the discussed voter guides. Here are some summarized findings:

- Voter guides that are distributed to every registered voter or every household with registered voters come at a higher cost. The benefit of these printed and mailed guides is that they can reach underserved or historically marginalized populations more easily and they can reach citizens who are not yet registered to vote.
- Online-only voter guides are significantly less expensive, but they have limited utility and usage among the states that use this method.
- Some states have transitioned from a printed and mailed guide (Utah) or reached legislative compromises to establish an online-only guide with printed supplements in public facilities (Hawaii).
- The states examined with printed and mailed voter guides generally, but not always, have a higher turnout of eligible voters than states with online-only voter guides. 2024 general election turnout for the states examined in this report:
 - Printed and mailed:
 - AZ = 63.60%
 - OR = 71.94%
 - WA = 70.17%
 - Online-only
 - CT = 67.08%
 - HI = 50.27%
 - UT = 64.15%

- *MN (for comparison) = 76.35%*
- Anecdotally, when OSS staff have discussed with young people the idea of a voter guide, youth have reported a preference for the printed and mailed option compared to an online-only offering.⁴
- The choice between a printed-mailed (plus online) versus online-only product comes down to several factors:
 - Cost
 - Voter access to candidate information
 - External services cost including translation and copy review
 - Benefits of primary product choice (printed-mailed versus online) based on the experiences of other states as outlined above
- Based on the number of households in Minnesota and cost-averaging of other states' printed and mailed voter guide products, a printed-mailed voter guide in Minnesota would likely cost approximately \$3,000,000 per general election cycle. The bulk of the costs would be printing and mailing costs, amounting to approximately \$2,517,672. The additional costs would include costs associated with staff to prepare the guide, translation services, copy review and other services. This cost would yield a guide for the statewide general election only, not for the state primary.
- An online-only guide with supplemental bulk printing for public facilities would likely cost approximately \$600,000 in the first general election cycle biennium and \$300,000 in ongoing funds per biennium.
 - Initial, one-time costs of IT development, production and capacity would be required to expand current online services provided by the OSS.
 - The ongoing appropriation would fund staff, external services including translation and copy review, and bulk print runs for public buildings and other locations.

4. Recommendation

The OSS recommends serious legislative consideration of a comprehensive voter guide for Minnesota voters. The initial voter study results show that Minnesota voters say they want more information about candidates, particularly judicial and local candidates. This mirrors what the OSS voter outreach team hears throughout the state, and what the OSS hears from election administrators.

The guide would also serve to supplement other recommendations in this report, including an ongoing voter education campaign, mis- and disinformation voter education initiatives, and voter instructions and terminology clarifications and simplifications. While not a catch-all, a guide has the potential to increase voter turnout in Minnesota. A voter guide would ensure that

⁴ While anecdotal and informal, these conversations question the assumption of both OSS and some voter advocates that young people and future voters have a preference for an online-only product.

Minnesota remains competitive with other states' voter education offerings and would compile information on voting and candidates in a single place - in a way that Minnesota does not currently provide.

Voter advocacy organization representatives generally agreed with this recommendation and expressed mostly positive views on the idea of a state-funded and published comprehensive voter guide. They expressed a desire to include local and judicial candidates in the guide. It was suggested that candidates should have to file in the guide as a prerequisite to file for office to ensure equal access to information about candidates among all Minnesotans. They generally expressed a preference for a printed guide over an online guide for accessibility reasons. They expressed the need for guides to be translated into non-English languages, and to be culturally competent for immigrant and historically marginalized populations. They shared that a version of the guide should be made in audio or video form to ensure that voters who cannot read English or other languages can still benefit from this resource.

c. Language Accessibility

The areas of language access is a desired areas of continuous improvement for the OSS, and this need for improvement was reflected in the voter study.

Currently, the OSS offers voter educational materials in 13 non-English languages. In addition, every polling place in Minnesota must by law offer materials in three non-English languages. Stricter language access requirements are placed on "language minority districts", defined as census tracts with populations over 3% that speak English "less than very well." For all precincts in language minority districts, voting instructions and sample ballots will be translated into the most commonly spoken non-English language for all precincts in that census tract. These materials are posted and available for voters as a reference when casting a ballot. In census tracts where 20% or more of the population speak English "less than very well," ten or more registered voters may file a request with the secretary of state or their county auditor to have an interpreter in the polling place provide translation services for voters. Finally, Ramsey County also must offer voting materials and ballots in the Hmong language per Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The voter study recommends that the OSS continue to expand on and emphasize the language access requirements currently provided. The OSS recommends continuing to advertise the availability of voting materials in 13 non-English languages, including audio guides for individuals who may wish hearing voting information in their preferred language. This includes promoting the ASL voter hotline conducted in conjunction with the Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing, and working to expand language access in the OSS main voter hotline. In addition, the OSS continues to recommend partnering with community organizations to provide information about the language resources currently available to voters. As the new language access provisions are used by voters, the OSS recommends that

both the OSS and the legislature continue to assess whether the current statutory requirements are meeting voters' language needs or if additional changes should be implemented.

The voter study also noted a desire for increased diversity among election judges in order to ensure that voters see themselves reflected among local election officials, and to increase language access through multilingual election judges. The OSS recommends continuing to examine how to diversify Minnesota's election judge workforce, including examining the laws governing election judge hiring to ensure there are no unintended barriers to hiring a diverse and qualified election judge staff.

Finally, voter advocacy organizations further expressed a desire for additional focus on non-English resources for voters in particular communities that they serve, as well as continued enhancement of election judge training regarding the implementation of non-English language statutory access provisions. The OSS supports these recommendations.

d. Physical Accessibility

Increased physical accessibility is also a desired area of continuous improvement for the OSS, and this need for improvement was reflected in the voter study.

The OSS continues to work to explore methods to enhance voter participation among Minnesotans with disabilities. The OSS maintains a Disability Advisory Council (DAC) made up of representative organizations serving voters with disabilities. The DAC advises the OSS on legislative changes, voter outreach and education, and in partnership with the Minnesota Disability Law Center conducts an accessibility survey of polling places in Minnesota.

While Minnesota's polling places meet the requirements of state and federal law, the polling place accessibility survey indicates that there are improvements to make polling places more accessible to all voters.

The OSS recommends that the legislature consider a dedicated legislative appropriation for voter accessibility. Additionally, greater flexibility in use of the polling place disability access grants, appropriated by the legislature in 2023, would allow for expansion of these grants. Currently, the grants are limited to public facilities (schools, county and city offices, etc.). While this is an understandable limitation, many jurisdictions rely on houses of worship or other private facilities as polling places due to lack of public facilities. The OSS proposes the legislature consider an expansion of the grant to allow for private facilities that act as polling places to receive disability access polling place grants if they agree to continue being a polling place for a certain amount of time as stipulated by statute. This would strike a balance between the need for voters to have equal access to accessible polling places and the need to receive a promise of longevity for investing funds in privately owned facilities.

Voter advocacy organization representatives expressed some support of this recommendation and expressed support for recently adopted legislative provisions that allow for early voting locations on tribal lands, providing increased physical accessibility through proximity for voters.

e. Voter Instructions and Terminology

Election administrators in the voter study noted that some voters experience difficulties with following instructions to complete absentee ballots, both in-person and by mail. The OSS recommends simplifying instructions for these ballot methods to reduce confusion and reduce the amount of rejected absentee ballot applications and absentee return materials.

Voter advocacy organization representatives generally agreed with this recommendation and support the use of clear and district descriptions around voting methods. Representatives who work with particular communities and populations noted that certain populations, particularly immigrants, utilize absentee voting less than in-person, election day voting due to cultural preferences and familiarities of the voting process in their home countries, many of which do not have any form of absentee voting.

The OSS plans to utilize the upcoming adoption of true early voting 2026 as an opportunity to reassess the terminology around voting methods prior to election day. The OSS further recommends continuing to work with communities and community organizations serving voters with lower early voting rates to explore ways to communicate voting method options to Minnesotans who are less familiar with early voting methods.

f. Mis- and Disinformation Education

Voters and election administrators alike shared that it was important for OSS to develop resources to address mis- and disinformation about Minnesota's election system. For the purpose of this report, mis- and disinformation means the spread of false information about how Minnesota's elections system functions from a technical standpoint. Mis- and disinformation does not include legitimate policy discussions about how Minnesota's elections system ought to function. In the voter study, voters and election administrators struggled to articulate concretely what these resources to address mis- and disinformation should be and how OSS should develop these resources.

The OSS agrees that mis- and disinformation about elections remains a significant problem and unnecessarily undermines the public's trust in Minnesota's elections system. One of the most effective ways to combat mis- and disinformation is to educate voters on how the system works so that mis- and disinformation is identified as such by the voter themselves.

The OSS recommends that the legislature consider increased support for voter education to combat mis- and disinformation. Voter advocacy organization representatives agreed with this recommendation. They suggested identifying both public and non-public trusted messengers of election information to counter mis- and disinformation, and to be a trusted voice in educating

voters on how the system works. There was some disagreement about who these trusted messengers are, but there was agreement that trusted messengers should be empowered to spearhead public campaigns that counter mis- and disinformation.

g. Ranked Choice Voting

Participants in the voter study expressed interest in the adoption of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in more jurisdictions and for more offices. The voter study also reflected the need for further education on this voting method, with over 21% of participants indicating that they were unsure whether or not their jurisdiction even used RCV. Further, the small percentage of respondents to the voter study that did express opposition to RCV indicated that their opposition was due to lack of trust in the system or the fact that it was difficult for voters to understand. A robust education and outreach program in conjunction with the adoption of RCV at the local would help in addressing these concerns.

The OSS supports the ability of all local jurisdictions to adopt RCV for local non-partisan contests, and supports the use of RCV in even-year elections with necessary statutory changes. The OSS also supports requiring dedicated outreach and education funding for any jurisdiction transitioning to this method of voting, and would encourage these funds to be used in partnership with trusted community voices to ensure all voters are educated on the RCV method, including how their vote will be tabulated, before voters cast their first RCV ballot.

5. Technical Aspects of RCV Implementation

Several technical and administrative challenges exist to adopting RCV beyond the odd-year municipal level in Minnesota, and will require legislative changes in order to allow for adoption of RCV in conjunction with state general elections, for multiple overlapping jurisdictions to conduct RCV elections, and for RCV contests that impact multiple counties. This section outlines these challenges - and the changes that will generally be required.

Ballots

Minnesota law currently specifies the order that races must appear on the ballot, and only allows for a second ballot card to be used for judicial races if they cannot fit on the standard ballot. Changes to these legal requirements will be needed in order to ensure that RCV elections can be accommodated on the ballot along with non-RCV elections. The OSS supports allowing some flexibility in ballot order, but this flexibility must be balanced against the need for some consistency to allow for voter education on ballot content and to prevent confusion by voters.

Equipment

In order for the OSS to certify a voting system for RCV elections and tabulation there must be a uniform RCV statutory structure to certify against. Currently, RCV requirements are only outlined in city charters. While several of Minnesota's certified voting systems are capable of

being used in RCV elections, the state is unable to certify the RCV functionality without a legislative change.

Tabulation, Reallocation and Certification

Minnesota elections are conducted at the local level, by county or municipality, by design. The administration of RCV elections requires more work by elections officials to determine who won the election than a first-past-the-post election. For example, candidates who are eliminated via the instant runoff mechanism must have their first-choice voters' second and third choices reallocated to those second and third choice candidates. Votes often need to be reallocated in RCV elections, whenever a candidate does not achieve 50% or greater of first-choice votes. This is a feature of the system's design. Because RCV elections are currently run only on a municipal level in Minnesota, the geographically concurrent election jurisdiction is responsible for tabulation and reallocation of votes and certification of the election results.

If RCV is expanded to races that cross county lines, or is expanded so that multiple overlapping jurisdictions can conduct RCV elections, legislation would be necessary to identify which jurisdiction is responsible for the reallocation of votes if a candidate does not get over 50% of the vote in the first ranking.

Draft RCV Legislation

In order to address these technical and administrative issues, OSS supports adoption of legislation permitting a RCV local option for municipal elections. The OSS believes that the language in [H.F. 683](#) (Frazier) & [S.F. 1071](#) (Carlson) as introduced - 94th Legislature - would address all of the administrative and technical issues identified with allowing RCV in even years and at the county and municipal levels. The OSS further recommends that the legislature either provide or require funding for voter education efforts prior to implementation of an RCV election, and that such educational outreach be conducted not only by the jurisdiction but in conjunction with partner organizations that serve as trusted messengers within the communities adopting RCV.

6. Summary of RCV Recommendations

OSS supports adoption of a RCV local options bill. Allowing additional statutory and charter cities to use RCV for odd-year municipal elections is a necessary prerequisite for assessing the impact of RCV in Minnesota.

VII. Summary OSS Legislative Recommendations

OSS recommends to the Legislature the following steps that the Office believes will enhance voter education, engagement and participation in Minnesota:

1. Provide an ongoing, dedicated legislative appropriation to OSS to produce a statewide comprehensive voter information guide.
 - a. OSS appreciates the current challenging budget outlook for the State.
 - b. OSS believes that in a future biennium, when the budget outlook has improved, a comprehensive voter information guide would have a profoundly positive impact on eligible Minnesota voters and the way that they research their candidates prior to voting.
2. Provide an ongoing, dedicated legislative appropriation to OSS and/or a competitive grant program to nonprofit partners for ongoing general voter education efforts.
 - a. OSS believes that this appropriation, along with a voter guide, would position Minnesota to continue to lead the nation in voter turnout.
 - b. Include in this appropriation a dedicated focus on combatting election mis- and disinformation.
 - c. Include in this appropriation a dedicated focus on expanding access to polling places for voters with disabilities and expanded language access provisions.
3. Modify the accessible polling places grant to allow for issuance of grants to private institutions serving as polling places (e.g. houses of worship).
 - a. Institute a grant requirement for private institutions that they agree to serve as a polling place for a period of time to ensure that there is a return on investment.
4. Modify use of the term “absentee” in statute to “early in-person or mail voting” to use more specific, voter-friendly terminology.
 - a. Prioritize through legislation in coordination with OSS and county groups like MACO and AMC a reassessment of early in-person or mail voting instructions.
5. Adopt the RCV local option provision, most recently introduced as [H.F. 683](#) (Frazier) & [S.F. 1071](#) (Carlson) in the current biennium.

VIII. Conclusion

This Final Report is not an end, but part of an ongoing process to improve and perfect Minnesota’s election system. Our system is strong overall but could always be better. The analysis and conclusions contained in this document broadly address the issues that the legislature has chosen, within boundaries that the legislature has set, but do not represent the only possible paths. OSS remains committed to hearing from anyone of any political affiliation from any part of the state – with suggestions, ideas, concerns, or constructive criticism. The best ideas come from all over Minnesota.

IX. Appendices

a. The Interim Report

The Interim Report, referenced several times throughout this Final Report, also known as the Study on Voter Engagement, Education and Improvements, [can be found here.](#)

[OSS voter engagement study](#)

b. H.F. 683 (94th Legislature)

The RCV local options bill, introduced as H.F. 683 (Frazier) & S.F. 1071 (Carlson). The full text of the house file is included below.

This Document can be made available
in alternative formats upon request

State of Minnesota

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-FOURTH SESSION

H. F. No. **683**

02/13/2025 Authored by Frazier, Coulter, Norris, Rehrauer, Hemmingsen-Jaeger and others
The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Elections Finance and Government Operations

- 1.1 A bill for an act
- 1.2 relating to elections; providing for ranked choice voting; authorizing jurisdictions
- 1.3 to adopt ranked choice voting for local offices; establishing procedures for adoption,
- 1.4 implementation, and use of ranked choice voting for local jurisdictions; allowing
- 1.5 local jurisdictions to use electronic voting systems with a reallocation feature;
- 1.6 authorizing rulemaking; appropriating money; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024,
- 1.7 sections 204B.35, subdivision 1; 204C.21, by adding a subdivision; 204D.07,
- 1.8 subdivision 3; 205.13, subdivision 2; 206.57, by adding a subdivision; 206.83;
- 1.9 proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 206; proposing coding
- 1.10 for new law as Minnesota Statutes, chapter 204E.
- 1.11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:
- 1.12 Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 204B.35, subdivision 1, is amended to read:
- 1.13 Subdivision 1. **Application.** All ballots for every election shall be prepared in accordance
- 1.14 with sections 204B.35 to 204B.44 and ~~chapter~~ chapter chapters 204D and 204E, except for voting
- 1.15 machine ballots or as otherwise provided by law.
- 1.16 Sec. 2. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 204C.21, is amended by adding a subdivision to
- 1.17 read:
- 1.18 Subd. 4. **Ranked choice voting election.** Notwithstanding the requirements of this
- 1.19 section, the votes cast in a ranked choice voting election must be counted according to the
- 1.20 procedures established in chapter 204E.
- 1.21 Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 204D.07, subdivision 3, is amended to read:
- 1.22 Subd. 3. **Exception; certain nonpartisan candidate.** If not more than twice the number
- 1.23 of individuals to be elected to a nonpartisan office file for the nomination, their names and
- 1.24 the name of the office shall be omitted from the state and county nonpartisan primary ballot

and the candidates who filed shall be the nominees. For candidates in a nonpartisan ranked choice voting election, candidates shall be omitted from the state and county primary ballot.

Sec. 4. **[204E.01] APPLICABILITY; AUTHORIZED LOCAL ADOPTION ONLY.**

This chapter applies to all elections conducted using ranked choice voting as authorized by section 204E.03. Except as otherwise provided by this chapter, Minnesota election law applies to elections conducted using ranked choice voting.

Sec. 5. **[204E.02] DEFINITIONS.**

Subdivision 1. **Application.** For the purposes of this chapter, the terms defined in this section have the meanings given.

Subd. 2. **Active candidate.** "Active candidate" means any candidate who has not been defeated or elected and is not a withdrawn candidate.

Subd. 3. **Batch elimination.** "Batch elimination" means a simultaneous defeat of multiple continuing candidates who are mathematically impossible to be elected.

Subd. 4. **Cast vote record.** "Cast vote record" means the tabulatable record of all aggregated votes produced by a single voter in one voting session. For ballots on which voters have indicated a write-in choice, the finalized cast vote record indicates whether the write-in choice was cast for one of the declared write-in candidates, and if so, which one.

Subd. 5. **Hand count election.** "Hand count election" means an election in which all tabulation of ballots is done by hand, regardless of whether the ballots are cast in a polling place or as absentee or mail ballots.

Subd. 6. **Highest continuing ranking.** "Highest continuing ranking" means the ranking on a voter's ballot with the lowest numerical value for a continuing candidate.

Subd. 7. **Inactive ballot.** "Inactive ballot" means a ballot that does not count for any candidate in a given round of tabulation as provided in section 204E.06 or 204E.07.

Subd. 8. **Mathematically impossible to be elected.** "Mathematically impossible to be elected" means:

(1) the candidate cannot be elected because the sum of (i) the candidate's current vote total and (ii) the current vote totals of all other candidates in the current round with fewer votes or an equal number of votes would not be enough to surpass the candidate with the next higher current vote total; or

(2) the candidate has a lower current vote total than a candidate who is described by clause (1).

Subd. 9. Maximum possible threshold. "Maximum possible threshold" means the number of votes sufficient for a candidate to be elected under a first ranked choice tabulation under sections 204E.06 and 204E.07. Maximum possible threshold equals:

(1) the sum of the total ballots cast that include votes, undervotes, skipped rankings, and overvotes for the office; divided by

(2) the sum of one plus the number of offices to be filled; then

(3) adding one to the result; and

(4) disregarding any fractions.

Subd. 10. Multiple-seat election. "Multiple-seat election" means an election in which two or more seats in an office are to be filled from a single set of candidates on the ballot.

Subd. 11. Overvote. "Overvote" means a voter has ranked more than one candidate at the same ranking.

Subd. 12. Partially defective ballot. "Partially defective ballot" means a ballot that is defective to the extent that the election judges are unable to determine the voter's intent with respect to the office being counted.

Subd. 13. Ranked choice voting. "Ranked choice voting" means an election method in which voters rank candidates for an office in order of their preference, with each vote counting for the highest-ranked continuing candidate on each ballot until that candidate has been elected or defeated as provided in this chapter.

Subd. 14. Ranked choice voting local election official. "Ranked choice voting local election official" means the county auditor, school district clerk, or municipal clerk responsible for duties related to election administration in the applicable jurisdiction. Where more than one ranked choice voting election jurisdiction is involved, the ranked choice voting local election official is presumed to be the county auditor if the county has adopted ranked choice voting. If an overlapping city and school district adopt ranked choice voting, the municipal clerk is presumed to be the ranked choice voting election official. Nothing in this subdivision prohibits overlapping jurisdictions from agreeing to an alternative ranked choice voting election official.

4.1 Subd. 15. **Ranked choice voting tabulation center.** "Ranked choice voting tabulation
4.2 center" means the location where ballots are processed automatically or by hand and are
4.3 tabulated.

4.4 Subd. 16. **Ranking.** "Ranking" means the number assigned by a voter to a candidate to
4.5 express the voter's preference for that candidate. Ranking number one is the highest ranking.
4.6 A ranking of lower numerical value indicates a greater preference for a candidate than a
4.7 ranking of higher numerical value.

4.8 Subd. 17. **Repeat candidate ranking.** "Repeat candidate ranking" means a voter ranks
4.9 the same candidate at multiple rankings for the office being counted.

4.10 Subd. 18. **Round.** "Round" means an instance of the sequence of voting tabulation steps
4.11 established in section 204E.06 or 204E.07.

4.12 Subd. 19. **Single-seat election.** "Single-seat election" means an election in which one
4.13 seat in an office is to be filled from a single set of candidates on the ballot.

4.14 Subd. 20. **Skipped ranking.** "Skipped ranking" means a voter has left a ranking blank
4.15 and ranks a candidate at a subsequent ranking.

4.16 Subd. 21. **Surplus.** "Surplus" means the total number of votes cast for an elected
4.17 candidate in excess of the threshold.

4.18 Subd. 22. **Surplus fraction of a vote.** "Surplus fraction of a vote" means the proportion
4.19 of each vote to be transferred when a surplus is transferred. The surplus fraction is calculated
4.20 by dividing the surplus by the total votes cast for the elected candidate, calculated to four
4.21 decimal places, ignoring any remainder.

4.22 Subd. 23. **Threshold.** "Threshold" means the number of votes sufficient for a candidate
4.23 to be elected. In any given single-seat election, the threshold equals: the total votes counted
4.24 during that tabulation round, excluding inactive ballots; divided by two; then adding one;
4.25 and disregarding any fractions. In any given multiple-seat election, the threshold equals:
4.26 the total votes counted in the first round after removing defective ballots; divided by the
4.27 sum of one plus the number of offices to be filled; adding one to the result; and disregarding
4.28 any fractions.

4.29 Subd. 24. **Totally defective ballot.** "Totally defective ballot" means a ballot that is
4.30 defective to the extent that election judges are unable to determine the voter's intent for any
4.31 office on the ballot.

4.32 Subd. 25. **Transfer value.** "Transfer value" means the fraction of a vote that a transferred
4.33 ballot will contribute to the next ranked continuing candidate on that ballot. The transfer

value of a vote cast for an elected candidate is calculated by multiplying the surplus fraction of each vote by its current value, calculated to four decimal places, ignoring any remainder. The transfer value of a vote cast for a defeated candidate is the same as its current value.

Subd. 26. Transferable vote. "Transferable vote" means a vote or a fraction of a vote for a candidate who has been either elected or defeated.

Subd. 27. Undeclared candidate. "Undeclared candidate" means a candidate who does not file a request within the time required by section 204E.05, subdivision 4, for the candidate's write-in votes to be counted and whose name does not otherwise appear on the ballot.

Subd. 28. Undervote. "Undervote" means a voter did not rank any candidates for an office.

Sec. 6. **[204E.03] AUTHORIZATION FOR LOCAL ADOPTION.**

(a) After January 1, 2026, or the adoption of administrative rules governing ranked choice voting by the secretary of state, whichever is later, the following political subdivisions may adopt, in the manner provided in this section, ranked choice voting as a method of voting for local offices within the political subdivision:

(1) home rule charter or statutory cities;

(2) school districts; and

(3) counties.

(b) A jurisdiction, whether governed by statute or charter, that adopts ranked choice voting may only do so by a ballot question presented to the voters. The ranked choice voting method may be repealed by the same method used for adoption.

(c) Before adopting the use of ranked choice voting for an election held in conjunction with a statewide election, a jurisdiction must enter into a conditional agreement with the county or counties responsible for administering the jurisdiction's election.

(d) If a home rule charter or statutory city adopts ranked choice voting without an agreement with the county or counties, the election conducted by ranked choice voting must not be held in conjunction with a statewide election and the jurisdiction must administer its own election.

(e) Before a school district can adopt the use of ranked choice voting for an election not held in conjunction with a statewide election, the district must first enter into a conditional

agreement with the city or cities within the district's boundaries responsible for administering any elections conducted not in conjunction with a statewide election.

(f) A home rule charter jurisdiction that adopts a ranked choice voting system in its charter may adopt this chapter by reference in an ordinance but is not required to do so.

(g) Ranked choice voting must only be used to elect local offices at a general or special election.

(h) A jurisdiction that adopts the use of ranked choice voting in local elections must do so no later than 20 weeks before the state primary or 90 days before the first day for filing affidavits of candidacy for the office for which ranked choice voting is to be used as the method of election if the election is not held in conjunction with a state primary or state general election.

(i) Repeal of ranked choice voting must be no later than 90 days before the first day for filing affidavits of candidacy for offices for which ranked choice voting is used as the method of election.

(j) The ranked choice voting local election official must notify the secretary of state and, if applicable, the county auditor within four weeks following adoption or repeal of ranked choice voting.

Sec. 7. [204E.04] BALLOTS IN LOCAL RANKED CHOICE VOTING ELECTIONS.

Subdivision 1. **Ballot format.** (a) If there are three or more qualified candidates, a ballot must allow a voter to rank three candidates for each office in order of preference and must also allow the voter to add write-in candidates.

(b) A ballot must:

(1) include instructions to voters that clearly indicate how to mark the ballot;

(2) include instructions to voters that clearly indicate how to rank candidates in order of the voter's preference; and

(3) indicate the number of seats to be elected for each office.

Subd. 2. **Mixed-election method ballots.** If elections are held in which ranked choice voting is used in addition to other methods of voting, the ranked choice voting and nonranked choice voting elections must be on the same ballot card if possible, with ranked choice voting and nonranked choice voting portions clearly separated. A jurisdiction may not deviate from the standard ballot order of federal offices, state offices, or state constitutional

amendments, but may deviate from the standard ballot order for other offices to allow separation of ranked choice voting and nonranked choice voting elections.

Subd. 3. **Ballot format rules.** The secretary of state must adopt rules regarding ranked choice voting ballot format, consistent with this section. Notwithstanding section 204B.36, the rules adopted under this subdivision may provide a standard for ballot format that differs from the standards required by that section.

Sec. 8. [204E.05] LOCAL RANKED CHOICE VOTING TABULATION CENTER.

Subdivision 1. **Tabulation of votes; generally.** The ranked choice voting local election official must designate one location to serve as the ranked choice voting tabulation center. If the tabulation includes a manual count of physical ballots, the center must be accessible to the public for the purpose of observing the vote tabulation. Tabulation of votes must be conducted as described in sections 204E.06 and 204E.07.

Subd. 2. **Precinct tabulation.** In an election where ranked choice voting is used, the county auditor, municipal clerk, or school district clerk shall deliver one set of summary statements, all spoiled ballots, and the envelopes containing the ballots to the ranked choice voting tabulation center as soon as possible after the vote counting is completed and the election judges have returned materials pursuant to section 204C.27.

Subd. 3. **Notice of recess in count.** At any time following receipt of materials under subdivision 2, the ranked choice voting local election official may declare a recess. Notice of the recess must include the date, time, and location at which the process of recording and tabulating votes will resume and the reason for the recess. Notice must be posted on the local jurisdiction's official bulletin board and on the door of the ranked choice voting tabulation center. During any recess, all electronic voting data and ballots must be secured.

Subd. 4. **Recording write-in votes.** (a) At a time set by the ranked choice voting local election official, the judges and any other election officials designated by the ranked choice voting local election official shall convene at the ranked choice voting tabulation center to examine ballots on which voters have indicated a write-in choice and record the names and number of votes received by each write-in candidate who submits a request as required by this subdivision. The number of votes received by write-in candidates who did not file a request as provided in this subdivision must be recorded as a group by office.

(b) Notwithstanding section 204B.09, subdivision 3, a candidate for a city or school district office whose election is governed by this chapter and who wants write-in votes for the candidate to be counted must file a written request with the filing officer not more than

seven days before the election. The filing officer shall provide copies of the form to make the request. The filing officer shall not accept a written request later than 5:00 p.m. on the last day for filing a written request.

Subd. 5. Ranked choice vote tabulation. After all votes have been recorded, and at a time set by the ranked choice voting local election official, the process of tabulating votes cast for offices to be elected using the ranked choice method must begin. The counting must continue until preliminary results for all races are determined, subject to subdivision 3.

Sec. 9. [204E.06] TABULATION OF VOTES; SINGLE-SEAT LOCAL RANKED CHOICE VOTING ELECTIONS.

(a) This section applies to a ranked choice voting election in which one seat in an office is to be filled from a single set of candidates on the ballot. The method of tabulating ranked choice votes for single-seat elections as described in this section must be known as the "single-seat single transferable vote" method of tabulation.

(b) A first ranked choice tabulation shall be done under this paragraph before a tabulation as described in paragraph (c). A first ranked choice tabulation will consist of a first round only. Under the first ranked choice tabulation, the vote total will be the sum of the ranked votes marked number one. The maximum possible threshold must be determined. If the vote total for a candidate, other than an undeclared or a declared write-in candidate, is equal to or greater than the maximum possible threshold, that candidate is declared elected and the tabulation is complete. If the vote total for no candidate, other than an undeclared or a declared write-in candidate, is equal to or greater than the maximum possible threshold, additional rounds must be performed as provided in paragraph (c).

(c) Tabulation of votes at the ranked choice voting tabulation center must proceed in rounds for each office to be counted. The threshold must be calculated. The sum of all ranked choice votes for every candidate must be calculated. Each round must proceed sequentially as follows:

(1) the number of votes cast for each candidate, as indicated by the highest continuing ranking on each ballot, must be counted. If a candidate, other than an undeclared write-in candidate, has a vote total that is equal to or greater than the threshold, that candidate is declared elected and the tabulation is complete. If no candidate, other than an undeclared write-in candidate, has a vote total that is equal to or greater than the threshold, a new round begins and the tabulation must continue as described in clause (2);

(2) at the beginning of the second round only, all undeclared candidates must be defeated and all candidates for whom it is mathematically impossible to be elected may be defeated simultaneously. For third and subsequent rounds, the candidate with the fewest votes must be defeated and all candidates for whom it is mathematically impossible to be elected may be defeated simultaneously. Votes for the defeated candidates must be transferred to each ballot's next-ranked continuing candidate, except votes for candidates defeated in the final round are not transferred if, by their defeat, the number of continuing candidates is reduced to one. If no candidate can be defeated under this clause, the tabulation must continue as described in clause (3). Otherwise, the tabulation must continue as described in clause (4);

(3) ties between candidates with the fewest votes must be resolved by lot by the ranked choice voting local election official. The candidate chosen by lot must be defeated. The result of the tie resolution must be recorded and reused in the event of a recount;

(4) the procedures in clauses (1) to (3) must be repeated until one candidate reaches the threshold. When only one continuing candidate remains, that continuing candidate must be elected; and

(5) when a skipped ranking, overvote, or repeat candidate ranking is encountered on a ballot, that ballot shall count toward the highest continuing ranking that is not a skipped ranking, overvote, or repeat candidate ranking. If any ballot cannot be advanced because no further continuing candidates are ranked on that ballot, or because the only votes for further continuing candidates that are ranked on that ballot are either overvotes or repeat candidate rankings, the ballot shall not count toward any candidate in that round or in subsequent rounds for the office being counted.

Sec. 10. [204E.07] TABULATION OF VOTES; MULTIPLE-SEAT LOCAL RANKED CHOICE VOTING ELECTIONS.

(a) This section applies to a ranked choice voting election in which two or more seats in office are to be filled from a single set of candidates on the ballot. The method of tabulating ranked choice votes for multiple-seat elections as described in this section must be known as the "multiple-seat single transferable vote" method of tabulation.

(b) A first ranked choice tabulation shall be done under this paragraph before a tabulation as described in paragraph (c). A first ranked choice tabulation will consist of a first round only. Under the first ranked choice tabulation, the vote total will be the sum of the ranked votes marked number one. The maximum possible threshold must be determined. If the number of candidates, other than any undeclared or declared write-in candidate, whose vote total is equal to or greater than the maximum possible threshold is equal to the number of

seats to be filled, those candidates are declared elected and the tabulation is complete. If the number of candidates, other than any undeclared or declared write-in candidate, whose vote total is equal to or greater than the maximum possible threshold is less than the number of seats to be filled, additional rounds must be performed as provided in paragraph (c).

(c) Tabulation of votes at the ranked choice voting tabulation center must proceed in rounds for each office to be counted. The threshold must be calculated. The sum of all ranked choice votes for every candidate must be calculated. Each round must proceed sequentially as follows:

(1) the number of votes cast for each candidate for the current round must be counted. If the number of candidates, other than any undeclared write-in candidate, whose vote total is equal to or greater than the threshold is equal to the number of seats to be filled, those candidates who are continuing candidates are elected and the tabulation is complete. If the number of candidates, other than any undeclared write-in candidate, whose vote total is equal to or greater than the threshold is not equal to the number of seats to be filled, a new round begins and the tabulation must continue as described in clause (2);

(2) surplus votes for any candidates whose vote total is equal to or greater than the threshold must be calculated;

(3) the candidate with the largest surplus is declared elected and that candidate's surplus is transferred. A tie between two or more candidates must be resolved by lot by the ranked choice voting local election official. The surplus of the candidate chosen by lot must be transferred before other transfers are made. The result of the tie resolution must be recorded and reused in the event of a recount. The transfer value of each vote cast for an elected candidate must be transferred to the next continuing candidate on that ballot. If no candidate has a surplus, the tabulation must continue as described in clause (4). Otherwise, the tabulation must continue as described in clause (1);

(4) if there are no transferable surplus votes, the candidate with the fewest votes is defeated. Votes for a defeated candidate are transferred at their transfer value to each ballot's next-ranked continuing candidate, except votes for candidates defeated in the final round are not transferred if, by their defeat, the number of continuing candidates is reduced to the number of seats yet to be filled. Ties between candidates with the fewest votes must be resolved by lot by the ranked choice voting local election official, and the candidate chosen by lot must be defeated. The result of the tie resolution must be recorded and reused in the event of a recount;

11.1 (5) the procedures in clauses (1) to (4) must be repeated until the number of candidates
11.2 whose vote total is equal to or greater than the threshold is equal to the number of seats to
11.3 be filled, or until the number of continuing candidates is equal to the number of seats yet
11.4 to be filled. If the number of continuing candidates is equal to the number of seats yet to be
11.5 filled, any remaining continuing candidates must be declared elected; and

11.6 (6) when a skipped ranking, overvote, or repeat candidate ranking is encountered on a
11.7 ballot, that ballot shall count toward the highest continuing ranking that is not a skipped
11.8 ranking, overvote, or repeat candidate ranking. If any ballot cannot be advanced because
11.9 no further continuing candidates are ranked on that ballot, or because the only votes for
11.10 further continuing candidates that are ranked on that ballot are either overvotes or repeat
11.11 candidate rankings, the ballot shall not count toward any candidate in that round or in
11.12 subsequent rounds for the office being counted.

11.13 **Sec. 11. [204E.08] LOCAL RANKED CHOICE VOTING ELECTIONS;**
11.14 **REPORTING RESULTS.**

11.15 (a) In addition to the requirements of section 204C.24, each precinct must print an
11.16 additional precinct summary statement, which must include the number of first choices cast
11.17 for each candidate in that precinct.

11.18 (b) The ranked choice voting local election official must provide a tabulation summary
11.19 statement of each contest with the following information:

11.20 (1) total votes cast;

11.21 (2) number of undervotes;

11.22 (3) number of totally defective and spoiled ballots;

11.23 (4) threshold calculation;

11.24 (5) total first choice rankings for all candidates;

11.25 (6) round-by-round tabulation results, including simultaneous batch eliminations, surplus
11.26 transfers if applicable, and defeated candidate transfers; and

11.27 (7) inactive ballots at each round.

11.28 (c) In jurisdictions where ballots are scanned and recorded electronically, the ranked
11.29 choice voting local election official must provide an electronically available spreadsheet of
11.30 the cast vote record, consistent with the requirements of section 206.845.

(d) The jurisdiction must canvass the election returns pursuant to applicable state statutes for the election being held, and the canvassing board report must include the information required in the ranked choice voting tabulation center summary statement, with the addition of the number of persons registered to vote before election day by precinct, the number of persons registered on election day by precinct, and the number of accepted regular, military, and overseas absentee ballots and mail ballots. If the election is held in conjunction with a state general election, the canvass report must also include the number of federal office only absentee ballots and, if applicable, the number of presidential absentee ballots.

Sec. 12. **[204E.09] LOCAL RANKED CHOICE ELECTION RECOUNTS.**

(a) A candidate defeated in the final round of tabulation may request a recount as provided in section 204C.361, to the extent applicable. For the purpose of ranked choice voting recounts, the ranked choice voting local election official is the recount official and the filing officer.

(b) A candidate defeated in the final round of tabulation when the vote difference is greater than that provided in section 204C.36 may request a recount at the candidate's own expense. A candidate defeated in an earlier round of tabulation may request a recount at the candidate's own expense. The candidate is responsible for all expenses associated with the recount, regardless of the vote difference between the candidates in the round in which the requesting candidate was defeated. The requesting candidate shall file with the filing officer a bond, cash, or surety in an amount set by the filing officer for the payment of the recount expenses. Expenses must be determined as provided in section 204C.36, subdivision 4.

(c) The secretary of state must adopt rules governing recounts conducted under this section.

(d) At the discretion of the recount official, in the case of a recount under paragraph (a) or (b) or by the requesting candidates, a recount may commence with the earliest tabulation round in which any requesting candidate was defeated or any prior round. All other candidates who, in the initial tabulation, were defeated prior to the round in which the recount starts may be presumed to have been correctly defeated.

Sec. 13. **[204E.10] LOCAL RANKED CHOICE ELECTIONS; POSTELECTION REVIEW.**

Subdivision 1. **Selection of test date; notice.** At the canvass, the ranked choice voting local election official must select by lot the offices and precincts to be reviewed and set the

13.1 date, time, and place for the postelection review, in accordance with section 206.89.

13.2 Postelection review is not required for a hand count election.

13.3 Subd. 2. **Scope and conduct of test.** The postelection review must be conducted in
13.4 public and must review a sample of ballots cast for at least one single-seat ranked choice
13.5 voting election and at least one multiple-seat election, if such an election occurred.

13.6 Subd. 3. **Review.** (a) For each office to be reviewed, the number of precincts selected
13.7 for review shall be determined as follows: if the office was voted on in fewer than five
13.8 precincts, one precinct shall be selected; if the office was voted on in at least five precincts
13.9 and fewer than 50 precincts, two precincts shall be selected; if the office was voted on in
13.10 at least 50 precincts and fewer than 100 precincts, three precincts shall be selected; and if
13.11 the office was voted on in at least 100 precincts, four precincts or three percent of the total
13.12 number of precincts in the election shall be selected, whichever is greater.

13.13 (b) For each office voted on in a county election, the ranked choice voting local election
13.14 official may select precincts as specified in paragraph (a) or use the precincts selected in
13.15 accordance with section 206.89.

13.16 (c) Using the actual ballots cast in each precinct selected, the judges of the election shall
13.17 conduct a hand-count tabulation of how many ballots contain each combination of candidates
13.18 across the rankings. All undeclared write-in candidates shall be considered as a group in
13.19 this hand count, and blank or overvoted rankings shall be included as such in the tabulated
13.20 combinations.

13.21 Subd. 4. **Standard of acceptable performance by voting system.** A comparison of the
13.22 results compiled by the voting system with the cast vote records compiled by the judges of
13.23 the election performing the hand count must show that the results of the electronic voting
13.24 system differed by no more than the applicable threshold provided in section 206.89,
13.25 subdivision 4, from the hand count of the sample tested. Valid votes that have been marked
13.26 by the voter outside the vote targets or using a manual marking device that cannot be read
13.27 by the voting system must not be included in making the determination whether the voting
13.28 system has met the standard of acceptable performance.

13.29 Subd. 5. **Additional review if needed.** An additional review is required if:

13.30 (1) a test reveals a difference greater than the threshold provided in section 206.89,
13.31 subdivision 4, in at least one precinct of an office, the ranked choice voting local election
13.32 official must immediately, publicly select by lot two additional precincts of the same office
13.33 for review. The additional precinct review must be completed within two days after the
13.34 precincts are selected and the results immediately reported to the county auditor; and

(2) the additional precinct review indicates a difference in the vote totals that is greater than the applicable threshold, as provided by section 206.89, subdivision 4, in at least one additional precinct of an office, the ranked choice voting local election official must conduct a review of the ballots from all the remaining precincts in the office being reviewed.

This review must be completed no later than two weeks after the canvass.

Subd. 6. **Report of results.** Upon completion of the postelection review, the ranked choice voting local election official must immediately report the results to the county auditor and make the results available to the public.

Subd. 7. **Update of vote totals.** If the postelection review under this section results in a change in the number of votes counted for any candidate, the revised vote totals must be incorporated in the official result from those precincts.

Subd. 8. **Effect on voting systems.** If a voting system is found to have failed to record votes accurately and in the manner provided by this chapter, the voting system must not be used at another election until it has been approved for use by the county auditor, pursuant to section 206.58. In addition, the county auditor may order the city to conduct a hand recount of all ballots cast in the election.

Sec. 14. [204E.11] RULES; LOCAL OPTION RANKED CHOICE VOTING.

The secretary of state must adopt rules necessary to implement the requirements and procedures established by this chapter.

Sec. 15. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 205.13, subdivision 2, is amended to read:

Subd. 2. **Notice of filing dates.** At least two weeks before the first day to file affidavits of candidacy, the municipal clerk shall publish a notice 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 at least ten days before the first day to file affidavits of candidacy. If ranked choice voting pursuant to chapter 204E is to be used, the notice must indicate the method of election to be used for the offices on the ballot. The notice must separately list any office for which affidavits of candidacy may be filed to fill the unexpired portion of a term when a special election is being held to fill a vacancy as provided in section 412.02, subdivision 2a.

15.1 Sec. 16. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 206.57, is amended by adding a subdivision to
15.2 read:

15.3 Subd. 6a. **Required certification for ranked choice voting.** In addition to the
15.4 requirements of this section, a voting system used to administer ranked choice voting under
15.5 chapter 204E must provide a test lab report from a voting system test lab accredited by the
15.6 Election Assistance Commission or other appropriate federal agency responsible for testing
15.7 and certification of compliance with the federal voting systems guidelines at the time of
15.8 submission of the application required by subdivision 1. The test lab report must show that
15.9 the system is in conformity with voluntary voting system guidelines issued by the Election
15.10 Assistance Commission or other appropriate federal agency.

15.11 Sec. 17. **[206.802] ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEMS; PURCHASING.**

15.12 A voting system purchased for use in Minnesota to administer ranked choice voting on
15.13 or after the effective date of this section must have the ability to:

15.14 (1) capture, store, and publicly report ballot data;

15.15 (2) to the extent practicable, produce a single human-readable file for each contest on
15.16 the ballot containing all cast vote records captured for that contest;

15.17 (3) keep data anonymous;

15.18 (4) accept ranked or cumulative voting data under a variety of tabulation rules;

15.19 (5) be programmable to follow all other specifications of the ranked choice voting system
15.20 or be compatible with automatic tabulating equipment or a software reallocation feature;

15.21 (6) provide a minimum of three rankings for ranked choice voting elections;

15.22 (7) to the extent practicable, notify voters of the following errors: overvotes, skipped
15.23 rankings, and repeat candidate rankings in a ranked choice voting election; and

15.24 (8) be programmable to print a zero tape indicating all rankings for all candidates in a
15.25 ranked choice voting election.

15.26 **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective upon certification by the secretary of
15.27 state that equipment meeting the standards required by this section is available for purchase
15.28 and implementation. The secretary of state must notify the revisor of statutes when this
15.29 certification is made.

Sec. 18. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 206.83, is amended to read:

206.83 TESTING OF VOTING SYSTEMS.

(a) At least three days before voting equipment is used, the official in charge of elections shall have the voting system tested to ascertain that the system will correctly mark ballots using all methods supported by the system, including ranked choice voting if applicable, and through assistive technology, and count the votes cast for all candidates and on all questions. Public notice of the time and place of the test must be given at least two days in advance by publication once in official newspapers. The test must be observed by at least two election judges, who are not of the same major political party, and must be open to representatives of the political parties, candidates, the press, and the public. The test must be conducted by (1) processing a preaudited group of ballots punched or marked to record a predetermined number of valid votes for each candidate and on each question, and must include for each office one or more ballot cards which have votes in excess of the number allowed by law in order to test the ability of the voting system tabulator and electronic ballot marker to reject those votes; and (2) processing an additional test deck of ballots marked using the electronic ballot marker for the precinct, including ballots marked using the electronic ballot display, audio ballot reader, and any assistive voting technology used with the electronic ballot marker. If an election is to be conducted using ranked choice voting, the equipment must also be tested to ensure that each ranking for each candidate is recorded properly.

(b) If any error is detected, the cause must be ascertained and corrected and an errorless count must be made before the voting system may be used in the election.

(c) After the completion of the test, the programs used and ballot cards must be sealed, retained, and disposed of as provided for paper ballots.

Sec. 19. **APPROPRIATION.**

\$..... in fiscal year 2026 and \$..... in fiscal year 2027 are appropriated from the general fund to the secretary of state for costs associated with implementation of this act.