

Election Costs: What States Pay

8/3/2018

Overview

Pinning down how much it costs to administer an election is notoriously difficult. Part of the difficulty is that several levels of government—states, counties, municipalities and even special districts—have a hand in running (and paying for) elections.

Elections in the U.S. are usually run at the county level, though in several New England and Midwestern states they are run at the city or township level. This means that there are more than 10,000 jurisdictions that have primary responsibility for running elections in the country--and that's not counting the subdivisions within those jurisdictions.

Those subdivisions may include municipalities that run municipal elections, schools boards that run school board elections, and special districts such as fire districts or Municipal Utility Districts (MUD) that run elections from time to time too. Sometimes the county has a role in running the elections for these subdivisions; other times it doesn't (see the article in NCSL's newsletter *The Canvass*: [Election Dates May or May Not Matter](#) for more information).

If this all sounds complicated, it is. Rather than try to precisely identify who pays for what in each state and for each election type, this analysis focuses on the states' roles in assisting counties or local jurisdictions in paying for the administration of elections.

(The "state" refers to the secretary of state's office, lieutenant governor's office, state board of elections, or a combination of these organizations, depending on how each state is structured. See NCSL's webpage on [Election Administration at State and Local Levels](#) for more information.)

The Impact of Federal Laws

In regard to election administration, the country was once more decentralized than it currently is. A series of federal laws in the last 50 years have had the impact of putting more of the responsibility (and therefore the cost) of elections on states, rather than local jurisdictions. This transition began with the civil rights legislation of the 1960's, but accelerated in the 1990's and 2000's.

- [The National Voter Registration Act \(NVRA\) of 1993](#), commonly referred to as "motor voter," required state election offices to work with state departments of motor vehicles and other agencies to offer voter registration.
- [The Help America Vote Act \(HAVA\)](#) of 2002 required states to establish centralized statewide voter registration databases, consolidating the voter lists of its various counties and jurisdictions. This gave state offices a duty that many did not previously have. HAVA also provided funds for the replacement of voting equipment and improvement of election administration. States were charged with developing state plans for the disbursement of these funds, and to this day are more involved with the procurement of voting equipment than they had been prior to HAVA.
- Two federal laws involving military and overseas voters, the [Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act](#) of 1986 and the [Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act \(MOVE\)](#) of

2009 also gave state offices additional responsibilities in facilitated registration and voting for overseas citizens.

As a result of these laws, and especially since 2002, additional election-related duties and responsibilities have fallen to state election offices. As a result the role that state offices play in election administration has expanded, as has the state's share of costs in some cases.

Although in most states the majority of election-related costs still are borne by counties and localities, there are several things for which the state may chip in:

- [Statewide voter registration databases required by HAVA.](#)
- [Certain types of elections](#) (such as special elections, state-only elections or presidential primary elections).
- [Voting equipment.](#)
- [Training and/or compensation for local election officials.](#)
- [Some election-related supplies](#) (most commonly ballots).
- [Voter information dissemination.](#)

Statewide Voter Registration Databases

In 2002 HAVA required states to develop “a single, uniform, official, centralized, interactive computerized statewide voter registration list defined, maintained and administered at the state level.” States implemented this requirement in a variety of ways, with either a “top-down” system hosted by the state with data supplied by localities, a “bottom-up” system where localities host the data and it is periodically compiled at the state level, or a hybrid system which combines the two. According to the [2016 Statutory Overview from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission](#), 34 states and DC have a top-down system, six states have a bottom-up system and nine use a hybrid system. North Dakota does not maintain a voter registration list or database. However, they do have a list of previous voters.

The cost of establishing and maintaining these statewide systems is borne by the state (with funding assistance from HAVA).

States Paying for Certain Types of Elections

Some states pay for certain types of elections – for example a statewide special election where there are only state candidates or statewide issues on the ballot, or a presidential preference primary. Some states pay a portion of costs for any statewide candidates or issues that appear on the ballot, regardless of the election type. This is usually, though not always, done as a reimbursement whereby counties pay for the election initially and later submit a reimbursement request to the state. This chart divides the states that help pay into six categories.

Category	State	Details
<p>State pays all expenses for federal or state elections.</p>	<p>Alaska Alaska Stat. §15.15.032, §15.10.110, §15.15.060 et seq., §15.15.380, §15.15.390</p>	<p>State pays for and conducts federal and state elections, which are combined, and for certain local elections.</p>
	<p>Delaware Del. Code tit. 15 §4514, §201A, §215</p>	<p>The State Department of Elections has responsibility for and bears the cost of all election administration in the state.</p>
<p>State pays all expenses if only state candidates or issues are on the ballot. If other local issues are also on the ballot, state pays a portion of election expenses.</p>	<p>Alabama Ala. Code. §17-16-2 to §17-16-6</p>	<p>State pays for half of elections that include federal, state and county races, or an election to amend the constitution. The state pays for the total cost of an election that contains only federal or state offices.</p>
	<p>Colorado Colo. Rev. Stat. §1-5-505.5</p>	<p>State reimburses counties for all election costs if the only item on the ballot is a statewide ballot issue. For any other election where there is a statewide ballot issue/question on the ballot, the state reimburses at 90 cents per active registered voter in counties with 100,000 or fewer active registered voters, or 80 cents per voter in counties with more than 100,000 voters.</p>
	<p>Hawaii Hawaii Rev. Stat. §11-182 to §11-184</p>	<p>State pays all expenses for state elections which do not involve county offices. When both state and county offices are on the ballot, counties pay a prorated amount based on the proportion of total registered voters and the state pays remaining expenses.</p>
	<p>Louisiana La. Rev. Stat. §18:1400.1 to §18:1400.8</p>	<p>State pays for election expenses for gubernatorial and congressional general and primary elections and presidential primary elections, unless local candidates or questions also appear on the ballot, in which case the state pays half. The remaining half is split between the state and local or municipal jurisdictions participating in the election.</p>

Category	State	Details
<p>State bears a portion of the cost of all elections.</p>	<p>Kentucky Ky. Rev. Stat. §117.345</p>	<p>State reimburses counties for the cost of elections at a set rate of \$255 per precinct annually.</p>
	<p>Rhode Island R.I. Gen. Laws §17-6-3 et seq. §17-7-5 §17-9.1-2 §17-19-2 et seq.</p>	<p>Local jurisdictions in Rhode Island pay for poll workers and polling sites. The state bears all other costs of the election, including voting equipment, polling place supplies and ballots.</p>
<p>State pays for statewide special elections or statewide elections that don't coincide with regularly scheduled elections when there is only a state candidate or question on the ballot. If other local issues are also on the ballot, state may pay a portion of election expenses.</p>	<p>Arkansas Ark. Code Ann. §7-7-201, §7-4-101(11) Ark. Admin. Code 108.00.5-501 to 108.00.5-507</p>	<p>Arkansas reimburses counties for statewide special elections and nonpartisan general elections on an estimated average cost per voter basis, by county, which is established by the State Board of Election Commissioners.</p>
	<p>Florida Fla. Stat. §100.102</p>	<p>State reimburses the “actual expenses” of holding a statewide special election.</p>
	<p>Iowa Iowa Code Ann. §49A.9</p>	<p>State reimburses for special elections for constitutional amendments or statewide public measures that are not held at the same time as the general election.</p>
	<p>Michigan Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. §168.487</p>	<p>State reimburses localities for actual costs of statewide special elections.</p>
	<p>Missouri Mo. Rev. Stat.</p>	<p>State pays for statewide elections when only state questions or candidates are on the ballot. State reimburses localities for the cost of conducting statewide elections in off-years and special</p>

Category	State	Details
	§115.061 to §115.065	elections that don't coincide with primary or general elections in even-numbered years. State shares a proportional cost of elections when state questions or candidates are submitted to a vote at the same time as questions or candidates from other political subdivisions.
	New Jersey N.J. Rev. Stat. §19:45-1.1	State pays expenses for special elections held to fill vacancies in the Senate or General Assembly.
	North Dakota N.D. Cent Code §16.1-01-02.3	State reimburses counties for all costs incurred in conducting a statewide special election not held on the date of a statewide primary or general election.
	Ohio Ohio Rev. Code §3501.17 §3513.301 et seq. §3521.03	State pays for the entire cost of an election when a statewide ballot measure is the only thing on the ballot. When a special election contains both a constitutional amendment posed by the legislature and ballot measures from a political subdivision, the state pays a proportional division of costs. State pays for special elections in certain instances when a candidate withdraws or dies prior to an election, or if there is a vacancy in the offices of representative to congress or governor.
	Oregon Or. Rev. Stat. §254.660 §246.179 §246.710	State pays for special elections, statewide recall or other statewide special elections not regularly scheduled. If a county is in fiscal distress that compromises the county's ability to conduct elections at an adequate level, the state may perform services necessary and seek reimbursement from the Emergency Board.
	Pennsylvania Pa. Cons. Stat. tit. 25 §2645	State reimburses county boards of elections for those additional costs incurred in any special election held to fill a vacancy in the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

Category	State	Details
	Tennessee Tenn. Code Ann. §2-12-109	State reimburses for all expenses for special elections when only a state assembly member is on the ballot.
	Washington Wash. Rev. Code §29A.04.410 to §29A.04.430	State reimburses prorated share of costs when state officers or measures are voted on in a state primary or general election in an odd-number year, and for a vacancy election to fill the position of U.S. senator or representative.
	West Virginia W. Va. Code §3-10-9	State reimburses for reasonable expenses for special elections to fill a vacancy not held on a regular election date.
State pays for statewide primary and presidential primary elections. Note: When states pay some or all election costs (the first three categories) this is also usually applicable to statewide and presidential primary elections.	Arkansas Ark. Code Ann. §7-7-201, §7-4-101(11) Ark. Admin. Code 108.00.5-501 to 108.00.5-507	State reimburses counties for presidential primary elections and statewide primary elections on an estimated average cost per voter basis, by county, which is established by the State Board of Election Commissioners.
	South Carolina S.C. Code Ann. §7-13-15 §7-11-20 §7-11-25	State pays all costs associated with primaries for state offices, offices including more than one county, countywide offices and special district offices. State conducts and pays for presidential preference primaries. Political parties may charge filing fees (not to exceed \$20,000) for each candidate certified to appear on the presidential primary ballot, which are then transmitted to the state for use in conducting the election. Parties may choose instead to conduct advisory primaries according to the party's own rules and at the party's expense.
	Texas Tex. Election Code §173.001 to §173.088	State reimburses for the majority of costs of all primary elections.

Category	State	Details
	§191.006	
State pays for presidential primary elections.	Arizona Ariz. Rev. Stat. §16-250	State reimburses counties for presidential primary elections at the rate of \$1.25 per active registered voter, though if the secretary of state determines that reimbursement at this rate would jeopardize the ability of a county to comply with federal and state laws the county may be released from that rate of reimbursement.
	Idaho Idaho Code §34-738	State reimburses all costs related to a presidential primary.
	Kansas Kan. Stat. Ann. §25-4508	State reimburses counties for direct expenses of a presidential preference primary election; however Kansas typically holds caucuses to select presidential nominees and has not held a presidential primary since 1992.
	Michigan Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. §168.624g	State reimburses localities for actual costs of presidential primaries.
	Minnesota Minn. Stat. §207A.15	The secretary of state reimburses counties and municipalities for expenses incurred in the administration of the presidential nomination primary from a special revenue fund.
	Missouri Mo. Rev. Stat. §115.785	State pays for all costs of presidential preference primaries unless there are political subdivisions holding an election on the same day, in which case the cost is proportional.
	Tennessee Tenn. Code Ann. §2-12-109	State reimburses all expenses for presidential preferences primaries.
	Virginia Va. Code Ann. §24.2-545	State pays for presidential primary elections.

Category	State	Details
	Washington Wash. Rev. Code §29A.56.060	State reimburses for all of the costs associated with a presidential primary election if it is held alone, and a prorated share of the costs otherwise.

What States Pay For in Elections

Voting Equipment

Most of the country replaced voting equipment in the mid-2000s, with the help of federal HAVA funds. HAVA required that jurisdictions replace lever and punch card voting machines with [optical scan or direct-electronic recording \(DRE\) voting machines](#). HAVA required a state plan to be submitted detailing how the funds were to be used (for voting equipment and also other election administration improvements). Through the discussion and submission of these state plans, one of the effects of HAVA was that states examined whether or not they wanted to purchase the same type of equipment for the entire state.

In the last three years, [at least half of state legislatures](#) have considered or adopted new elections technology. As we reach the next presidential election, that number will surely increase along with public demands for secure and reliable voting infrastructure. See NCSL's webpage on [Funding Election Technology](#) for more recent developments.

After HAVA, some states chose to move to a more uniform system, in which every jurisdiction had the same type of voting machine, either by buying the same equipment statewide, or by paying a portion of the costs of equipment. Many of these systems were purchased with federal funds, and it may be uncertain whether a statewide system will be purchased when it is time to replace these machines. States with uniform systems after HAVA included Alabama, Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Utah and Vermont. See NCSL's article on [Uniformity in Voting Systems](#) for more information. Some of these states are now moving away from a uniform system, as voting equipment ages and counties purchase new machines without state funding.

Arkansas and Colorado are both moving toward a more uniform system, but are using a “phased in” approach whereby counties will obtain the same type of equipment from the same vendor over several years. In Arkansas the state has been paying for counties to purchase new equipment as funds become available, with several states purchasing every year since 2015. In Colorado the state chose the vendor and equipment and negotiated the contract. Funds to purchase new equipment will come from the counties, but the state is making leftover HAVA funds available to assist counties with implementation of the new system.

States that pay for a portion of the equipment used to cast and tabulate votes:

- Maryland: The state pays for 50 percent of the purchase cost, counties pay for the other 50 percent.

- Mississippi: 50 percent of the state's Elections Support Fund goes to counties to assist with the acquisition, maintenance and upgrade of voting equipment.
- Missouri: The secretary of state administers a series of grant, loan and subsidy funds to assist election authorities with upgrades or improvements to the voting process or equipment.
- Vermont: The state pays for vote tabulators, maintenance and configuration of memory cards for towns with more than 1,000 registered voters, as long as HAVA funds are still available.

With new HAVA funds available as of March 2018, additional states will likely pitch in to assist counties with the cost of purchasing new voting equipment.

Some states provide funds to help upgrade/update equipment when they pass a certain policy measure. For example:

- Montana [enacted post-election audits in 2009](#) and made funds available to counties for equipment updates associated with the new law's implementation.
- Idaho passed an [election consolidation bill in 2009](#) that included an appropriation for voting machine upgrades should they be necessary to implement the law.
- California has a process to reimburse counties for the cost of new state mandates, though funds have not been available in order to do this in recent years (more details can be found in California Forward's report [Investing in California's Democracy: Building a Partnership for Performance](#)).

States may also assist with voting equipment maintenance, or provide other technical support to counties. In Wyoming, for example, there is a state plane available in Cheyenne for trouble-shooters from the state's main voting system vendor to take them to counties that might be experiencing problems.

HAVA plans were also required to contain information on how the state would adopt voting system guidelines and processes, leading to changes in state testing and certification processes. In many states, this put yet another responsibility on the state election office. Current laws are outlined on NCSL's [Voting System Standards, Testing and Certification](#) page.

Assisting Local Election Officials

Almost every state assists in some way with training local election officials, the county clerks, registrars or election boards that conduct elections on the county (or in some cases township) level. Election officials in the U.S. are often elected and may or may not have an elections background, so providing guidance or training to newly-elected or appointed officials is especially important. But so is keeping track of the election law changes each year, and ensuring that election officials have the most up-to-date information on how elections should be administered in the state.

States take a variety of approaches to assisting local election officials and have played an increasingly important role in training these officials since the passage of HAVA in 2002. Some states require election officials to attend a certification program, typically a series of state-provided classes over a period of a year or two. These classes may be offered online or in-person, or a combination of the two, and state law usually gives election officials a set period of time from their election/appointment to complete the

certification courses. After certification is obtained, an official typically must take a required number of “continuing education” courses in order to maintain certification.

Even if a state doesn’t have a formal election official certification program, it may require election officials to attend state-provided training annually or biannually. This is most common in more centralized states where the state election office plays a larger role in election administration, but is becoming increasingly common across the board. If a state doesn’t require election officials to attend training, it may still offer periodic training with the understanding that officials may need some extra assistance, especially when new legislation is passed that substantially changes procedures.

Although the state plays a central role in offering training courses in many states, local associations of election officials may also assist greatly with this process. They may offer mentoring programs for new election officials, for example, or their yearly meetings may contain a training component that is conducted by an experienced election official.

State is responsible for hiring, training and paying local election officials.	Alaska, Delaware
State certifies local election officials or provides mandatory training (* denotes states with a certification program).	Arizona*, Arkansas, Colorado*, Connecticut*, Georgia*, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa*, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan*, Minnesota*, Mississippi*, Montana*, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina*, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina*, Tennessee ^[1] , Vermont, Virginia*, Washington*, Wisconsin*, West Virginia
State provides voluntary training for local election officials, or training on certain aspects of elections (such as using the statewide voter registration system).	Alabama, California, Florida ^[2] , Idaho, Louisiana ^[3] , Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wyoming
State does not provide a training program for local election officials, but may publish digests, handbooks or compilations of election laws.	Nevada, New York

^[1] In Tennessee all election officials must go through training provided by the state, and they can also choose to take a certification exam that can qualify them for a higher salary rate.

^[2] In Florida election officials may choose to go through a certification program in order to qualify for a higher salary rate.

^[3] Local election officials in Louisiana may choose to complete the Louisiana Voter Registration Administrators' Certification Program, through Auburn University and the Election Center, to receive an increase in salary.

How States Work With Local Elections Officials

Some states assist counties even further, by paying for some personnel costs associated with elections. Personnel costs, including poll workers for Election Day as well as temporary employees to assist with everything from entering voter registrations to working overtime to get ballots counted on election night, are typically the largest line item in a local election official's budget.

- In Alabama poll workers who attend a precinct election official training school are entitled to an additional \$25 per day in compensation from the state (Ala. Code. §17-8-12).
- In Hawaii the state provides mandatory training and stipends for Election Day poll workers. The state may also pay for overtime costs for local election officials if it is strictly related to state responsibilities (Hawaii Rev. Stat. §11-184).
- In Kentucky counties can request reimbursement from the state for personnel costs up to \$0.50 per registered voter per year (Ky. Rev. Stat. §117.343).
- In Louisiana the state pays the salary of permanent and temporary employees that perform election duties and for law enforcement officers to maintain order for gubernatorial, congressional and presidential preference primary elections, unless local candidates or questions are on the ballot, in which case the state pays half. (La. Rev. Stat. §18:1400.1 to §18:1400.8). The state also reimburses for some expenses in providing training to poll workers and pays for personnel expenses incurred by early voting hours outside of regular business hours.
- In New Jersey counties may apply for reimbursement for compensation for members of district boards of elections (N.J. Rev. Stat. §19:45-6.2, 19:45-7).
- In Oklahoma the state reimburses counties for the chief election official's salary, and provides training for poll workers each even-numbered year, paying \$25 for attendance. (Okl. Stat. Ann. tit. 26 §2-118, §3-105.1, §3-109 to §3-111).
- In Tennessee the state covers part of local administrator of elections' salaries if they are state-certified (Tenn. Code Ann. §2-11-202).

State Providing Ballots or Other Supplies

Some states have taken on the task of providing ballots or other polling place supplies to local jurisdictions. In particular, this practice is common in northeastern states where elections are often run on the township level. The state provides ballots for local jurisdictions in Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. In many of these states the state also provides polling place supplies such as ballot boxes and voting booths. In Oklahoma the state prints ballots for statewide primaries, runoff primaries, general elections and special elections.

State Voter Information

Some states are required to produce and distribute information to voters, particularly voter information pamphlets, information on state candidates or ballot measures, or sample ballots. This often requires a mass mailing to every voter in the state, a large financial undertaking. Every state election agency also has a website that provides information for voters, though the information and services contained on these websites vary greatly. This is yet another way that state election offices pitch in money and

resources for election administration. See NCSL's webpage on [Voter Information: Varied State Requirements](#) for more detailed information.

Revenue for Election Administration

Election administration is not often thought of as revenue generator. However there are a few things that election administrators can charge for, mostly when providing information or materials to candidates or campaigns. For example:

- In [Louisiana](#) proceeds from the sale of maps of precincts and election jurisdictions by the secretary of state's office go into a Voting Technology Fund.
- In [Maine](#) the secretary of state may charge fees for providing voter information or absentee list information to political parties, organizations or individuals. These fees are put into a dedicated fund to offset the cost of keeping up the statewide voter registration list.
- In [Mississippi](#) monies derived from the annual report fees imposed on limited liability companies are deposited into the Elections Support Fund.
- In [West Virginia](#) the secretary of state may charge for data originating in the statewide voter registration system, and proceeds are deposited into the State Election Fund.
- In Nebraska, filing fees for candidates who file in the office of the secretary of state (national, state and most special district candidates) are credited to the Election Administration Fund.

Allocating Costs Between Counties and Other Political Subdivisions

The above analysis looks at the ways in which states assist counties with paying for election administration. But counties often require smaller political subdivisions to pay for portions of elections that county officials help run. For example, it is common for school board elections, municipal elections, or special district elections to be consolidated into a single election, run by the local election officials. There are many ways that the smaller entities help with costs; here are a few examples:

- Shared costs based on formulas:
 - In Arkansas school elections that are combined with other county elections, the school district pays for expenses incurred for poll workers at individual polling places, with the share of the total being determined by the number of votes cast in the school election as a proportion of the total number of votes cast in the election (Ark. Code Ann. §6-14-118).
 - In Louisiana if there are both state/federal candidates or statewide ballot questions as well as local candidates or questions on the ballot, the state pays for half of the election expenses, and the other half is shared pro rata by the local entities according to the "real estate" used on the ballot. The share that local entities pay is determined by dividing the entity's number of offices, propositions or questions on the ballot by the total number of all offices, propositions or questions on the ballot (La. Rev. Stat. Ann. art. 18 §1400.4).
 - In Missouri when more than one political subdivision has candidates or issues on the ballot, they share costs based on the number of registered voters in that subdivision as a

percentage of the total number of registered voters eligible for the election (Mo. Rev. Stat. §115.065).

- In Nebraska when there are several political subdivisions participating in an election, costs chargeable to the subdivisions are determined by “dividing the total cost by the number of precincts participating in the election to fix the cost per precinct, prorating the cost per precinct by the inked ballot inch in each precinct for each political subdivision, and totaling the cost for each precinct for each political subdivision, except that the minimum charge for each primary and general election for each political subdivision shall be one hundred dollars” (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 32-1203).
- Shared costs at discretion of county
 - In Colorado counties conduct a “coordinated election” if more than one political subdivision (state, county, municipality, school district or special district) holds an election on the same day in November. In these cases, there is a “reasonable sharing of the actual cost,” which does not include the cost of maintaining the county election office (Colo. Rev. Stat. §1-7-116). It is left to the discretion of counties to determine exactly how to divide the costs, except that if there is a statewide ballot measure on the ballot the state pays its typical rate (90 cents per active registered voter for counties with 100,000 or fewer active registered voters or 80 cents per voter for counties with more than 100,000 voters) (Colo. Rev. Stat. §1-5-505.5).
 - Montana political subdivisions bear a proportional share of the costs as determined by the county governing body (Mont. Code Ann. §13-1-302).
 - The costs assessed by a county clerk to a municipality in Utah may not exceed the actual costs incurred, including costs or rental fees associated with election equipment, supplies and reasonable and necessary administrative costs (Utah Code Ann. §20A-5-403).
- Fees for using voting machines:
 - In Delaware cities or towns may use county-owned voting machines if they pay all associated costs and expenses (Del. Code Ann. tit. 15 §5003A).
 - Georgia law specifies that counties *may not* levy a fee for use of the state voting equipment but may require municipalities to reimburse the county for the actual expenses related to the election (Ga. Code Ann. §21-2-300).
 - New Jersey counties may charge up to \$5 per voting machine for municipalities that would like to rent them for elections (N.J. Stat. Ann. tit. 19 §48-3.18).
 - Wyoming counties may charge subdivisions a fixed fee per day for use of county-owned voting machines, which then goes back into the county fund used to acquire and maintain voting machines (Wyo. Stat. §22-10-105 et seq.)
- Reimbursement of personnel expenses:

- In Indiana most expenses for municipal elections are the responsibility of the county, but the county may charge a municipality for the wages of extra persons employed to provide additional assistance related to the election (Ind. Code §3-5-3-1).
- In Oklahoma municipalities, school boards or other entities that authorize an election to be conducted by the county must pay the county upfront for compensation and employer's share of benefits for poll workers involved in the election (Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 26 § 3-105.1). The county may request reimbursement later for other expenses incurred during the election.

Election Administration Cost Studies

In terms of making policy decisions and improving the administration of elections, more and (better) data would always be helpful. If there is one thing that is particularly hard to pin down, though, it's the question of how much running an election costs. The sections above outline why this is such a complicated question. What's more, how much something "costs" can vary widely between different counties within a state. A larger county may pay less per ballot for printing costs than a smaller county because of economies of scale. And a smaller county may have no problem recruiting and paying poll workers, whereas this may be a complicated and expensive proposition or a larger county.

Efforts to collect better cost data are occurring in some states:

- In 2018 Washington introduced [HB 2529](#). If passed, it would create an election costs task force to examine the costs related to the administration of elections in the state.
- The California Association of Clerks and Elected Officials (CACEO), with support from the James Irvine Foundation, has an ongoing study of election costs in California counties beginning from the year 2004. It includes information on costs associated with staff salaries, services and supplies and election technology. Visualizations of the data and more information can be found at: <http://results.caceoelectioncosts.org/>
- Colorado's [ACE project \(Accountability in Colorado Elections\)](#) has a variety of statistics, graphs and visualizations about Colorado elections, among them are [election cost statistics](#).
- North Dakota has collected the cost of administering elections since 1980 and makes this information, which includes the total cost and the cost per voter of each election, publicly available [here](#).
- The [Wisconsin Election Data Collection System \(WEDCS\)](#) collects extensive data about the election process from local jurisdictions. For a time it also collected cost information and issued [cost reports](#), but as of 2017 no longer collects this particular data element. Wisconsin has a particularly diverse system, since elections are run at the local level – in 1,853 jurisdictions in the state.

Recent Legislation

- In 2018 Arizona made a one-time appropriation ([SB 1058](#)) of \$2.5 million to the secretary of state's office for the purpose of reimbursing expenses incurred by a county for the

administration of the special primary and special general elections to fill the vacancy in the United States house of representatives for Arizona's congressional district 8.

- In 2018 the California legislature approved \$134 million for replacing aging voting systems and \$3 million to beef up cybersecurity ([AB 1824](#)). The bill requires the secretary of state to use the funds for voting system replacement by reimbursing counties for eligible expenses based on the size of the county, the number of registered voters, and the secretary of state's estimate of need for voting equipment. To receive reimbursement, a county has to provide matching funds that are at least equivalent to state funds received.
- In 2018 Hawaii established a pilot program to try out all-mail elections, and included an appropriation to support the program ([HB 1401](#)).
- In 2018 Indiana passed [SB 327](#) to permit counties to apply for reimbursement for expenditures made to secure and monitor facilities where voting systems and electronic poll books are stored. However it does not include an appropriation to do so.
- In 2018 Michigan enacted [SB 290](#) to increase the amount a candidate must pay in order to defray the costs of a recount.
- In 2017 California enacted [SB 117](#) which provided \$250,000 specifically for counties moving to all-mail ballot elections for the purpose of voter outreach and education.