

HB 920 -- MUNICIPAL ELECTION DATES

SPONSOR: Baker

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Downsizing State Government by a vote of 9 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 4.

Beginning January 1, 2022, this bill changes the dates for primary and municipal elections and the procedure to follow when there is a vacancy. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Changes that upon a vacancy in any elective office, except for the office of Mayor, the successor shall serve until the next available general municipal election instead of the available regular April election (Section 77.450 RSMo);

(2) Changes the first regular meeting of the city council after the election to no later than the second Tuesday after the general municipal election day instead of the fourth Tuesday in April (Section 77.070); and

(3) Changes the election day for the election of political subdivision and special district officers to the first Tuesday after the first Monday from April to November each year (Section 115.121).

This bill is similar to HB 2656 (2020).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill will encourage local election turnout as currently local election turnouts are historically low. This bill will unhinge the grip certain caucuses have in communities in regards to local elections due the lack of turnout. More turnout will lead to more communities being properly represented in its leadership.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Baker.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that changing the local elections to November will overwhelm election workers. County clerks will have difficulty implementing all the configuration of ballots that will be necessary to make sure citizens received the correct ballots for their district.

Testifying against the bill were Matt Morrow, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce; The City of Springfield; Missouri Municipal League; and Missouri Association Of School Administrators.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that fewer elections do result in lower costs. Mail-in ballots could be helped with the changes this bill makes. However, human errors will increase with new configuration of ballots. There are also concerns on how to implement these changes. May be best to push the implementation of these changes back until a discussion can be had with county clerks and a detailed plan can be finalized.

Testifying on the bill were Missouri Association of County Clerks and Election Authorities; Trish Vincent, Missouri Secretary of State.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.