

Fifty-fifth  
Legislative Assembly  
of North Dakota

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1234**

Introduced by

Representative Kretschmar

1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact sections 15-47-06, 16.1-16-01, 40-21-13, and 40-21-17  
2 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to school district, city, and statewide election  
3 recounts.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 15-47-06 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
6 amended and reenacted as follows:

7 **15-47-06. Election procedure in all school districts - Canvass of boards - Tie vote**  
8 **- Absent voters - Recounts.** An election in a public school district, except as otherwise  
9 provided in this title, must be conducted and the votes must be canvassed in the manner  
10 provided by the laws of this state for the election of county officers. Immediately after the polls  
11 are closed, the judges shall count and canvass the votes for each office and within forty-eight  
12 hours after the polls are closed, the returns must be signed by the judges and clerks of the  
13 election and filed with the business manager of the school district. If the election results in a tie,  
14 the business manager of the district immediately, and in writing, shall notify the candidates  
15 between whom the tie exists, and within three days after the election, and at a time agreed  
16 upon by the candidates, the election must be decided in the presence of the judges and clerks  
17 of election in a manner agreed upon by the candidates. A record of the proceedings must be  
18 made in the records of the business manager of the district. The school board shall canvass all  
19 election returns and shall declare the result of any election within three days of the election, and  
20 in the case of a tie, within three days of the breaking of the tie pursuant to this section. The  
21 result of the election must be entered upon the records of the board. The person receiving the  
22 highest number of votes for each office in the district must be declared elected. Absent voters'  
23 ballots must be available in any school district election in accordance with chapter 16.1-07.  
24 Section 16.1-16-01 applies to public school district elections, except the members of the school

board not subject to a recount and not disqualified under subdivision c of subsection 2 of section 16.1-05-02 shall perform the duties of the recount board, the school district business manager shall perform the duties of the county auditor when the election is not combined with the county, the school board takes the place of the county canvassing board, and all expenses of the recount must be paid as provided in section 15-28-10.

**SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** Section 16.1-16-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**16.1-16-01. Election recounts.** A recount of any primary, special, or general election for nomination or election to a congressional, state, district, legislative, ~~or county~~, or city office, or for the approval or disapproval of any measure or question submitted to the qualified electors of this state or one of its counties or cities must be conducted as follows:

1. A recount must be conducted when:

- a. Any person failed to be nominated in a primary election by one percent or less of the highest vote cast for a candidate for the office sought.
- b. Any person failed to be elected in a general or special election by one-half of one percent or less of the highest vote cast for a candidate for that office.
- c. A question or measure submitted to the qualified electors has been decided by a margin not exceeding one-fourth of one percent of the total vote cast for and against the question at any election.

2. A demand for a recount may be made by any of the following:

- a. Any person who failed to be nominated in a primary election by more than one percent and less than two percent of the highest vote cast for a candidate for the office sought.
- b. Any person who failed to be elected in a general or special election by more than one-half of one percent and less than two percent of the highest vote cast for a candidate for that office.

3. A demand for a recount must be made within three days after the canvass of the votes by the county canvassing board in the case of county elections and city elections that are combined with the county, and by the state canvassing board in the case of congressional, state, district, or legislative elections. The demand must be in writing, must recite one of the conditions in subsection 2 as a basis for the

recount, must contain a bond in an amount previously established by the auditor or auditors doing the recount sufficient to pay the cost of the recount, and must be filed with:

- a. The secretary of state when the recount is for a congressional, state, district, or legislative office.
- b. The county auditor when the recount is for a county office or city office when a city election is combined with the county.

4. Within four days after the canvass of the votes by the state canvassing board in the case of congressional, state, district, or legislative elections, the secretary of state shall notify all the county auditors to conduct recounts as required by subsection 1 and, when a timely recount demand is received and it is in proper form, as required by subsection 2. The secretary of state shall fix the date or dates of the recounts of legislative contests to be held within seven days after giving notice ~~that the auditor must conduct the recount~~ to the affected auditors that recounts must be conducted. The secretary of state shall fix the date or dates of the recounts of statewide races to be held within fourteen days after giving notice to the auditors that recounts must be conducted. Within four days after the canvass of votes by the county canvassing board, the county auditor shall fix the date for recounts limited to ~~his~~ the county or those cities within the county which combined the election with the county. The date must be within eight days after the canvass. In all recount proceedings, the county auditor shall send notice of the date, place, and time of the recount to all candidates and petitioners involved by certified mail.

5. Recounts must be conducted by the county auditor who may employ up to four qualified electors of the county to assist in the recount. The county auditor shall review all paper, machine, and electronic voting system ballots, whether or not the ballots were counted at the precinct or the county canvass, and all properly postmarked absentee ballots cast pursuant to section 16.1-07-09 which arrived in time to be considered by the county canvassing board, whether or not the ballots were counted at the precinct or the county canvass, to determine which ballots were cast and counted according to the law. The county auditor shall check the precinct count and the count of the county canvassing board. If the county auditor

1 is a candidate involved in the recount, the county auditor shall be disqualified from  
2 acting thereon, and the clerk of the district court of the county shall perform the  
3 duties required of the county auditor by this section.

4 6. The persons entitled to participate at the recount are:

5 a. Each candidate involved in the recount, either personally or by a  
6 representative.

7 b. A qualified elector favoring each side of a question if the recount involves a  
8 question or proposition submitted to a vote of the electorate.

9 The persons allowed to participate may challenge the acceptance or exclusion of  
10 any ballot. The person challenging a ballot must state the reason for the challenge  
11 based upon the law, and the county auditor shall count the challenged ballot as he  
12 deems proper and shall then set the ballot aside with a notation that it was  
13 challenged and how it was counted. At the conclusion of the recount, the county  
14 auditor shall submit all challenged ballots to the recount board for decision. The  
15 recount board must be composed of the state's attorney of the county, the  
16 chairman of the board of county commissioners, and the clerk of the district court  
17 of the county. No person may serve on the recount board if he would not be  
18 qualified to serve on the election board pursuant to subsection 2 of section  
19 16.1-05-02. If any of the members of the recount board are disqualified or cannot  
20 serve for any other reason, the members of the board of county commissioners  
21 who would be qualified to serve on the board shall appoint disinterested qualified  
22 electors of the county to serve as alternates. The recount board shall review all  
23 challenged ballots, and on majority vote shall decide how they shall be counted.  
24 The decision of the recount board is final, subject to the right to contest the election  
25 as provided in this chapter. If during the recount a recess is called, the county  
26 auditor shall take appropriate steps to safeguard the ballots.

27 7. The county auditor shall certify the results of the recount no later than three days  
28 after the recount. The recount result shall become the official result of the election  
29 in the county. The county auditor shall prepare a corrected abstract of the votes.  
30 In a recount limited to the county or city, if the corrected abstract shows no change  
31 in the outcome of the election, no further action shall be taken. If the corrected

abstract changes the outcome of the election, the county auditor shall issue certificates of nomination or election accordingly, and shall certify the new result of a question submitted to the qualified electors. In the case of a city election that is combined with a county election, the county auditor shall certify the new results of the election to the city auditor who is responsible for issuing new certificates of election if applicable.

8. In congressional, statewide, district, or legislative recounts, the county auditor shall, no later than three days after the recount, send by certified mail a certified copy of the corrected abstract to the secretary of state. The secretary of state shall immediately assemble the state canvassing board, who shall canvass the corrected abstracts and certify the election results. The secretary of state shall issue certificates of election or nomination or record the approval or disapproval of a question submitted to the qualified electors accordingly.

9. The expenses incurred in a recount of a county election must be paid by the county on a warrant by the county auditor. The expenses incurred in a recount of a city election must be paid by the city on a warrant by the city auditor. The expenses incurred in a recount of a congressional, state, or legislative election must be paid by the state from the general fund, upon approval by the secretary of state of a statement of expenses received from the county auditors. The expenses incurred in a recount demanded under subsection 2 of section 16.1-16-01 must be paid by the secretary of state or county auditor from the bond submitted by the person requesting the recount.

10. This section also applies to city elections that are not combined with the county, except, the city auditor, to the extent applicable, shall perform the duties of the county auditor.

**SECTION 3. AMENDMENT.** Section 40-21-13 of the 1995 Supplement to the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**40-21-13. Municipal elections to be governed by rules applicable to county elections - Absent voting.** The manner of conducting, voting at, keeping poll lists, and canvassing votes at municipal elections, recounts, and contests of the results of the elections is governed, as nearly as possible and except as otherwise provided in this chapter, by the laws

of this state applicable to elections and contests in the case of county officers. Absent voters' ballots must be available in municipal elections in accordance with chapter 16.1-07.

**SECTION 4. AMENDMENT.** Section 40-21-17 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**40-21-17. Highest number of votes elects in municipal election - Procedure on tie vote.** The person having the highest number of votes for any municipal office shall be declared elected to such office. In case of a tie vote in the election of any municipal officer, ~~the choice shall be determined by a coin flip in the presence of the governing body of the municipality and in such manner as it shall direct~~ a recount must be conducted pursuant to section 16.1-16-01. If a recount results in a tie vote, the choice must be determined by a coin flip in the presence of the governing body of the municipality and in a manner it directs.