

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE
SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 837

Introduced by Lowe, 37.

Read first time January 03, 2024

Committee: Natural Resources

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to public power and irrigation districts; to
2 amend sections 70-604.03 and 70-612, Reissue Revised Statutes of
3 Nebraska; to provide for the division of voting precincts for
4 purposes of establishing boundary lines for operating areas,
5 chartered territory, and district elections and eliminate the
6 requirement of approval by the Secretary of State; to harmonize
7 provisions; to repeal the original sections; and to declare an
8 emergency.
9 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Section 70-604.03, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska,
2 is amended to read:

3 70-604.03 (1) To establish boundary lines of an operating area
4 coincident with the boundary lines of whole or divided voting precincts
5 ~~precinct~~ or county boundary lines, it shall be permissible to eliminate
6 area from or add area to the operating area so that retail distribution
7 areas are identified by reference to either whole or divided voting
8 precincts and wholesale distribution areas are identified by reference to
9 whole counties.

10 (2) Voting or election precincts may be divided for the purposes of
11 establishing operating area, chartered territory, and district elections.
12 The description of such divided precincts may be given by section,
13 township, and range ~~and shall be subject to the approval of the Secretary~~
14 ~~of State.~~

15 (3) Any retail customer whose principal residence is being served by
16 a public power district and whose principal residence is not in the
17 chartered territory of such district may request the district in writing
18 at least fifteen days prior to the certification date for such district,
19 as such date is provided in section 70-611, for the right for each
20 registered voter residing at such residence to vote for, and be eligible
21 to hold office as a member of, the board of directors of such district.
22 The secretary of the district shall cause notice to be given to each such
23 retail customer which reasonably prescribes the manner in which the
24 retail customer may request such right to vote. The notice shall be given
25 by first-class mail and may be included as part of the regular billing
26 statement mailed to a customer if such billing statement is sent by
27 first-class mail to such retail customer and the mail is conspicuously
28 marked as to its importance. Such notice shall be given at least sixty
29 days prior to the time the election certification and publication
30 information is transmitted to the Secretary of State pursuant to section
31 70-611. The district shall certify to the Secretary of State the names of

1 all such retail customers for whom such request to vote has been made
2 along with identification of the voting or election precincts in which
3 such retail customers reside, and each such retail customer shall be a
4 registered voter and qualified to hold office as a member of the board of
5 directors, if otherwise qualified to vote.

6 (4) Any district dividing a precinct pursuant to subsection (2) of
7 this section or certifying retail customers pursuant to subsection (3) of
8 this section shall transmit all necessary information relevant to such
9 division or certification along with the election certification and
10 publication provided for in section 70-611. All additional election costs
11 caused by such division or certification shall be due and payable by the
12 district within thirty days after the receipt of a statement from the
13 county.

14 Sec. 2. Section 70-612, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is
15 amended to read:

16 70-612 (1)(a) Subject to the provisions of Chapter 70, article 6,
17 and subject to the approval of the Nebraska Power Review Board, the board
18 of directors of a district, other than a district with a service area
19 containing a city of the metropolitan class, may amend the petition for
20 its creation to provide for the division of the territory of such
21 district into two or more subdivisions for the nomination and election of
22 some or all of the directors. Each subdivision shall be composed of one
23 or more voting precincts, or divided voting precincts, and the total
24 population of each such subdivision shall be approximately the same.
25 Except in districts which contain a city of the metropolitan class, two
26 or more subdivisions may be combined for election purposes, and members
27 of the board of directors to be elected from such combined subdivisions
28 may be nominated and elected at large when not less than seventy-five
29 percent of the population of the combined subdivisions is within the
30 corporate limits of any city.

31 (b) In the event a district formed includes all or part of two or

1 more counties and is (i) engaged in furnishing electric light and power
2 and more than fifty percent of its customers are rural customers or (ii)
3 engaged in furnishing electric light and power and in the business of
4 owning and operating irrigation works, then and in that event such
5 subdivisions may be formed by following the boundary lines of whole or
6 divided voting precincts ~~precinct~~ or county boundary lines without regard
7 to population if in the judgment of the Nebraska Power Review Board the
8 interests of the ~~rural~~ users of electricity or of users of irrigation
9 water service in such district will not be prejudiced thereby.

10 (2)(a) The board of directors of a district with a service area
11 containing a city of the metropolitan class may amend its charter to
12 provide for the division of the territory of the district into election
13 subdivisions composed of substantially equal population and compact and
14 contiguous territory and number the subdivisions consecutively and submit
15 the maps to the Nebraska Power Review Board.

16 (b) If the board of directors provides for eight election
17 subdivisions prior to January 1, 2014, the board of directors shall
18 assign each position on the board of directors to represent a numbered
19 election subdivision for the remainder of the term of office for which
20 the member is elected, regardless of whether the member resides in the
21 subdivision, and shall make such assignments so that the terms of members
22 representing election subdivisions numbered one, two, and three expire in
23 January 2015, the terms of members representing election subdivisions
24 numbered four and five expire in January 2017, and the terms of members
25 representing election subdivisions six, seven, and eight expire in
26 January 2019. If possible, each member shall be assigned to represent an
27 election subdivision that corresponds to the end of the term he or she is
28 serving.

29 (c) A successor who resides in the numbered election subdivision
30 shall be nominated and elected at the statewide primary and general
31 elections held in the calendar year prior to the expiration of the term

1 of the member who represents such numbered election subdivision.

2 (3) After each federal decennial census, the board of directors of a
3 district with a service area containing a city of the metropolitan class
4 shall create new boundaries for the election subdivisions. In
5 establishing the boundaries of the election subdivisions, the board of
6 directors shall follow county lines wherever practicable, shall provide
7 for the subdivisions to be composed of substantially equal population and
8 compact and contiguous territory, and shall, as nearly as possible,
9 follow the precinct lines created by the election commissioner or county
10 clerk after each federal decennial census.

11 (4) Any public power district or public power and irrigation
12 district owning and operating irrigation works may, with approval of the
13 Nebraska Power Review Board, add representation on its board of directors
14 from any county which is outside its chartered territory but in which is
15 located some or all of such irrigation works.

16 Sec. 3. Original sections 70-604.03 and 70-612, Reissue Revised
17 Statutes of Nebraska, are repealed.

18 Sec. 4. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when
19 passed and approved according to law.