

LEGISLATIVE BILL 105

Approved by the Governor April 7, 2025

Introduced by Hughes, 24; Raybould, 28.

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

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

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

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

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

(3) Any retail customer whose principal residence is being served by a public power district and whose principal residence is not in the chartered territory of such district may request the district in writing at least fifteen days prior to the certification date for such district, as such date is provided in section 70-611, for the right for each registered voter residing at such residence to vote for, and be eligible to hold office as a member of, the board of directors of such district. The secretary of the district shall cause notice to be given to each such retail customer which reasonably prescribes the manner in which the retail customer may request such right to vote. The notice shall be given by first-class mail and may be included as part of the regular billing statement mailed to a customer if such billing statement is sent by first-class mail to such retail customer and the mail is conspicuously marked as to its importance. Such notice shall be given at least sixty days prior to the time the election certification and publication information is transmitted to the Secretary of State pursuant to section 70-611. The district shall certify to the Secretary of State the names of all such retail customers for whom such request to vote has been made along with identification of the voting or election precincts in which such retail customers reside, and each such retail customer shall be a registered voter and qualified to hold office as a member of the board of directors, if otherwise qualified to vote.

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

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

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

(b) In the event a district formed includes all or part of two or more counties and is (i) engaged in furnishing electric light and power and more than fifty percent of its customers are rural customers or (ii) engaged in furnishing electric light and power and in the business of owning and operating irrigation works, then and in that event such subdivisions may be formed by following the boundary lines of whole or divided voting precincts ~~precinct~~ or county boundary lines without regard to population if in the judgment of the Nebraska Power Review Board the interests of the ~~rural~~ users of electricity or of users of irrigation water service in such district will not be prejudiced

thereby.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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