

Presidential Preference Election

Description of issue and how recommending the agency's request furthers the agency's mandates

The Arizona Secretary of State's Office (the Office) is required by law to conduct and support Arizona's Presidential Preference Election (PPE) and reimburse Arizona's 15 counties for eligible costs associated with administering the election. Unlike Arizona's regularly scheduled primary and general elections, the PPE is a separate statewide election conducted specifically for participating recognized political parties to allow their voters to express a preference for a presidential nominee. A separate ballot is prepared for each recognized political party participating in the PPE, and no other election may appear on the PPE ballot.

Because the PPE is a state-mandated election conducted by county election officials, Arizona law requires the state to provide funding for its administration. A.R.S. § 16-250 specifically requires the Secretary of State, in consultation with county recorders and county officers in charge of elections, to include sufficient state General Fund monies in the Office's budget request to conduct the Presidential Preference Election.

Under current law, counties are entitled to reimbursement at a rate of \$1.25 for each active registered voter in the county as of Jan. 2 of the year of the PPE, based upon a proper claim submitted to the Office. If the Office determines that reimbursement at the statutory rate would jeopardize a county's ability to comply with applicable federal or state election laws and regulations, the Secretary may release that county from the statutory reimbursement rate.

The state has historically appropriated General Fund monies to the Office for this purpose. In 2020, counties requested approximately \$6.37 million in PPE reimbursements and ultimately received approximately \$6.15 million. In 2016, counties requested approximately \$5.72 million and received approximately \$5.60 million. For the 2024 PPE, the legislature appropriated approximately \$5.93 million from the state General Fund for county reimbursements, logic and accuracy testing, and direct Office costs associated with conducting the election.

The 2028 PPE will similarly require significant statewide coordination among the Office, Arizona's 15 counties, political parties, election equipment vendors, and other election partners. In addition to reimbursing county expenses, the Office will incur direct costs necessary to administer the election at the state level, including temporary staffing, ballot and candidate-related activities, logic and accuracy testing, information technology and cybersecurity support, travel, supplies, voter and public information, election-related

communications, and other expenses directly attributable to administering an additional statewide election.

Previous PPE appropriations have provided funding for these direct Office expenses. In 2016 and 2020, the Office incurred direct PPE costs of approximately \$53,472 and \$26,231, respectively, for activities including logic and accuracy testing, petition processing, travel, supplies, and temporary staffing. The FY2024 appropriation subsequently authorized up to \$100,000 for direct Office expenses.

For 2028, the Office anticipates greater direct costs associated with administering and supporting a modern statewide election and therefore requests \$250,000 specifically for the Office's direct PPE expenses. This funding will ensure the Office has sufficient resources to perform its statutory responsibilities without diverting funding or personnel from other election administration activities.

As of the July 21, 2026 primary election registration report, Arizona had 4,306,554 active registered voters. Applying the statutory \$1.25 reimbursement rate to the current active voter population produces an estimated county reimbursement requirement of approximately \$5.38 million.

The precise county reimbursement obligation, however, cannot be determined until Jan. 2, 2028, because A.R.S. § 16-250 bases reimbursement on the number of active registered voters in each county on that date. In addition, the statute provides flexibility when reimbursement at the statutory rate would jeopardize a county's ability to comply with applicable federal or state election requirements.

Accordingly, the Office requests \$5.75 million for county reimbursements. This amount provides a reasonable allowance for changes in active voter registration between the preparation of this budget request and Jan. 2, 2028, as well as limited flexibility to address county costs consistent with the authority provided under A.R.S. § 16-250.

Combined with \$250,000 for direct Office costs, the total FY2028 request for the 2028 PPE is \$6.0 million.

Proposal

Appropriate \$6 million from the state General Fund in FY2028 to the Office to conduct the 2028 PPE and fulfill the state's statutory obligation to reimburse counties for the costs of administering the election.

The requested appropriation consists of:

Purpose	FY2028 Request
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County PPE reimbursements	\$5,750,000
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Office direct PPE costs	\$250,000
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Total FY2028 PPE Request	\$6,000,000
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The \$5.75 million county reimbursement amount is based upon the statutory reimbursement framework, current statewide voter registration, anticipated changes in active registration before Jan. 2, 2028, and the need for sufficient funding to meet the state's reimbursement obligations. Final county reimbursement amounts will be determined pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-250.

The \$250,000 reserved for the Office's direct costs will support activities necessary to conduct and administer the PPE, including temporary personnel, logic and accuracy testing, information technology and cybersecurity support, election administration, travel, supplies, public information and communications, and other direct election-related expenses.

Alternatives considered and reasons for rejection

N/A. The PPE and the state's obligation to fund county administration of the election are established by Arizona law. A.R.S. § 16-250 specifically requires the Office to include sufficient state General Fund monies in its budget request to conduct the PPE.

Impact of not funding this fiscal year

Failure to appropriate sufficient funding would prevent the Office from fulfilling its statutory obligation to reimburse Arizona's 15 counties for expenses associated with administering the 2028 PPE and would jeopardize the Office's ability to perform its own statutory responsibilities related to the election.

Insufficient funding could also force counties to absorb costs associated with administering an additional statewide election or require the Office to divert resources from other election administration and cybersecurity responsibilities. Because the PPE is a separate statewide election required by statute, adequate funding must be available before election activities begin.

Statutory reference

A.R.S. Title 16, Chapter 2, Article 4, including A.R.S. §§ 16-241 through 16-250.

Equipment to be purchased

N/A.

Classification of new positions

N/A.

Annualization

N/A.