

2028 Election Off-Year Election Costs

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

Historically, the Arizona Secretary of State's Office (the Office) has received election funding primarily in the fiscal year in which statewide primary and general elections occur. However, changes to election dates, statutory deadlines, and increasingly complex election administration requirements mean that significant costs associated with the 2028 elections must be incurred during FY2028, before the fiscal year in which those elections will occur.

These costs are not discretionary or unrelated operating expenses. They are preparatory activities necessary to conduct the 2028 primary and general elections and must occur according to statutory deadlines that cross fiscal years. Providing funding in FY2028 ensures the Office can perform this work when required rather than delaying necessary election preparations or diverting resources appropriated for other statutory purposes.

The FY2028 request includes the following components:

- **Temporary Cybersecurity Monitoring and Active Management:** Protecting Arizona's election infrastructure requires heightened cybersecurity monitoring and incident-response capabilities during the months leading into a presidential election cycle. While the Office is separately requesting funding to modernize obsolete information technology infrastructure and establish sustainable cybersecurity capabilities, those long-term investments do not eliminate the need for enhanced monitoring and active management during the 2028 election cycle. The Office requires \$500,000 in FY2028 for temporary cybersecurity monitoring, specialized contractors and security services, and enterprise-level tools necessary to strengthen existing defenses, identify potential threats, and provide enhanced monitoring as election activity increases.
- **Primary Election Logic and Accuracy (L&A) Testing:** As required by A.R.S. § 16-449, L&A testing ensures that voting equipment and election software accurately tabulate ballots before voting begins. Because of the statutory election calendar, preparation, and testing associated with the 2028 primary election must begin during FY2028. The Office must coordinate testing with Arizona's 15 counties and incur associated personnel, travel, transportation, and logistical expenses during the fiscal year in which those activities occur.
- **Ballot Measure Initiative Petition Signature Validation:** Committees seeking to place statewide initiatives or referenda on the 2028 general election ballot must

submit petition signatures according to deadlines established by Arizona law. The Office is responsible for receiving and processing those petitions and conducting the initial review and validation necessary before statutorily required county verification. Preparing for and conducting this work requires temporary staffing, software and technology resources, equipment, training, quality-control procedures, and other operational expenditures that begin during FY2028.

- **Candidate Petition Signature Validation:** Candidates seeking statewide and legislative office during the 2028 election cycle must submit nomination petitions according to statutory deadlines that require the Office to process candidate filings during FY2028. The Office validates these submissions using a combination of technology and human review. Temporary employees conduct much of this work under the supervision of permanent Office staff responsible for training, workflow management, and quality control. Funding is necessary for temporary personnel, software licenses, technology, equipment, and related administrative costs.

Election administration does not begin on Election Day or at the beginning of the fiscal year in which an election occurs. Preparing for a statewide presidential election is a continuous process that begins months in advance and necessarily crosses state fiscal years. The state's budget structure should recognize the actual timing of statutorily required election activities and provide the Office with the resources necessary to perform those responsibilities when they occur.

Proposal: Appropriate \$700,000 from the state General Fund in FY2028 for preparatory activities associated with the 2028 primary and general elections that must occur during FY2028.

Component	FY2028 Request
Temporary Cybersecurity Monitoring and Active Management	\$500,000
Primary Election Logic and Accuracy (L&A) Testing	\$50,000
Ballot Measure Initiative Petition Signature Validation	\$100,000
Candidate Petition Signature Validation	\$50,000
Total	\$700,000

This appropriation will allow the Office to meet statutory election deadlines, maintain appropriate cybersecurity protections, prepare for the 2028 statewide elections, and avoid

diverting resources from other statutorily required programs to pay election expenses that necessarily cross fiscal years.

Alternatives considered and reasons for rejection: The Office considered absorbing these expenses within its existing operating budget or waiting until FY2029 election funding becomes available. Neither alternative is viable because these activities must occur during FY2028 pursuant to statutory deadlines and operational requirements. Existing operating appropriations are not sufficient to absorb the extraordinary costs associated with preparing for a statewide presidential election cycle without reducing resources available for other statutory responsibilities.

Delaying these expenditures until FY2029 is similarly impracticable. Cybersecurity monitoring, petition processing, recruitment and training of temporary personnel, L&A testing preparations, and other election activities must occur when dictated by Arizona's election calendar rather than the state's fiscal-year calendar.

Impact of not funding this fiscal year: Without FY2028 funding, the Office would be required to absorb \$700,000 in 2028 election preparation expenses within existing appropriations, delay activities where legally permissible, or redirect personnel and resources from other statutory responsibilities.

Insufficient funding could affect the Office's ability to recruit and train temporary personnel, timely process candidate and ballot-measure petitions, conduct required election testing, and maintain the heightened cybersecurity monitoring appropriate for a presidential election cycle. Providing these resources in FY2028 recognizes that administering Arizona elections is a multi-year operational responsibility and ensures funding is available when statutorily required election work actually occurs.

Statutory reference: Titles 16 and 19, including A.R.S. § 16-449 and applicable statutes governing candidate nomination petitions, statewide initiative and referendum petitions, and election administration.

Equipment to be purchased: Technology, computer equipment, software licenses, cybersecurity tools, and other equipment necessary to support temporary election personnel and statutory election activities, as required.

Classification of new positions: N/A. Temporary personnel will be utilized as necessary to support petition processing and other election-related activities.

Annualization: N/A.