

HOUSE REPUBLICAN STAFF ANALYSIS

Bill:	House File 954 (HSB 281)	House Committee:	PASSED March 6 (14-7)
Committee:	State Government	House Floor:	PASSED March 25 (65-31)
Floor Manager:	Representative Harris	Senate Floor:	PASSED April 7 (32-15)
Date:	May 22, 2025	Governor:	
Staff:	Jason Covey (1-3626)		

Elections

- Provides fix for the Secretary of State to address the citizenship issues from the 2024 general election
- Raises the threshold to be a political party to 3 consecutive statewide elections achieving 2% of the vote, changes filing for NPPOs to primary election day, and adds sore loser ineligibility on candidate affidavit.
- Clarifies that federal office candidates cannot be challenged based on felony convictions.
- Bans ranked choice voting.

Section by Section Analysis

DIVISION I

ADMINISTRATION OF ELECTIONS

Section 1 – Voting by program participant — absentee ballot (Iowa Code 9E.6(3)(b)(1))

Codifies that a voter verification includes the four-digit PIN assigned to the voter by the SOS.

Section 2 – Special elections (Iowa Code 39.2(1)(a))

Adds the special election blackout window for city/school elections to match general election policies.

Section 3 – Affidavit of candidacy (Iowa Code 43.18(9))

Clarifies that being convicted of a felony is a disqualifier only for offices that are not federal offices.

Section 4 – Nominee's right to place on ballot (Iowa Code 43.67(2)(i))

Clarifies that being convicted of a felony is a disqualifier only for offices that are not federal offices.

Section 5 – Certificate (Iowa Code 44.3(2)(i))

Clarifies that being convicted of a felony is a disqualifier only for offices that are not federal offices.

Section 6 – Affidavit of candidacy (Iowa Code 45.3(9))

Clarifies that being convicted of a felony is a disqualifier only for offices that are not federal offices.

Section 7 – State commissioner of elections (Iowa Code 47.1(1,6,7,8))

Codifies the SOS's ability to issue election directives to clarify election law. Requires the county auditor's to notify SOS of any physical or cybersecurity threat assessments performed. Gives rulemaking authority to the SOS for minimum safety protocols for election vendors. Vendors fails to adhere to the protocols their access to the election infrastructure may be limited.

Section 8 – County commissioner of elections (Iowa Code 47.2(1))

Conforming code change to include SOS directives.

Section 9 – Acknowledgment of election day and in-person absentee registration form (Iowa Code 48A.26A(2))

County auditors are required to notify the county sheriff if an acknowledgment for election day registration is returned as undeliverable.

Section 10 – Electronic registration records (Iowa Code 48A.37(1))

Adds that voter registration forms are kept in the voter registration database.

Section 11 – Electronic election register and poll book (Iowa Code 49.29)

Allows the SOS to utilize an e-poll book.

Section 12 – Return and preservation of ballots (Iowa Code 50.12)

Updates that all ballots cast in Iowa are preserved by the county auditor 22 months.

Section 13 - Preservation and destruction of book (Iowa Code 50.19(1))

Updates that all election materials in Iowa are preserved by the county auditor 22 months.

Section 14 – Application for ballot (Iowa Code 53.2(4)(c))

Codifies that a voter verification includes the four-digit PIN and conforming code change to changes in Division 8 of this bill.

Section 15 - Absentee voting at the commissioner's office (Iowa Code 53.10(2)(b))

Codifies that a voter verification includes the four-digit PIN and conforming code change to changes in Division 8 of this bill.

Section 16 - Special precinct election board (Iowa Code 53.23(3)(a))

The Special election board shall convene no later than 9:00 am on election day.

Section 17 - Presidential nominees (Iowa Code 54.5(3))

The pledge of presidential electors shall be on a form prescribed by the SOS.

Section 18 – Presidential nominees (Iowa Code 54.5(5))

NEW SUBSECTION – Only objections to a nomination on the subject of legal sufficiency of the certificate shall be considered.

Section 19 - Written protest (Iowa Code 384.19(1))

Protests to a city budget must be signed by $\frac{1}{4}$ of one percent of the population of the city.

DIVISION II
Ranked Choice Voting

Section 20 – Number of votes for each office (Iowa Code 49.93)

Bans ranked choice voting for all elections in this state.

Section 21 – EFFECTIVE DATE

Take effect upon January 1, 2026.

DIVISION III
Person Permitted in Voting Booths

Section 22 – Limitation on persons in booth and time for voting (Iowa Code 49.88(3))

A candidate who occupies the voting booth with, or assists, a voter for that office commits an election code violation.

Section 23 – Assisting voter (Iowa Code 49.90)

Conforming code change.

Section 24 – EFFECTIVE DATE

January 1, 2026.

DIVISION IV
County Hospital Board of Trustees

Section 25 – Trustees — appointment — terms of office (Iowa Code 347.9(3))

Strikes the 6-year terms for county hospital trustees in counties over 400,00.

Section 26 – RETROACTIVE APPLICABILITY

This division applies retroactively to person elected on or after January 1, 2024.

DIVISION V
Political Party – Definition

Section 27 – Definitions (Iowa Code 43.2(1)(b))

Raises the threshold for “political party” to 3 consecutive elections of achieving 2% of votes cast in the last general election for President or Governor.

Section 28 – Canvass by state board (Iowa Code 43.63(1))

Raises the threshold for “political party” to 3 consecutive elections of achieving 2% of votes cast in the last general election for President or Governor.

Section 29 – Envelopes containing other abstracts — canvass (Iowa Code 50.36(2))

Raises the threshold for “political party” to 3 consecutive elections of achieving 2% of votes cast in the last general election for President or Governor.

Section 30 – Definitions (Iowa Code 68B.2(13)(b))

Raises the threshold for “political party” to 3 consecutive elections of achieving 2% of votes cast in the last general election for President or Governor.

DIVISION VI
Nomination Filing Deadlines

Section 31 – Nominations and objections — time and place of filing (Iowa Code 44.4(1))

Moves the nomination filing deadline for nonpolitical party organizations to 5:00 pm on the day of the June primary.

Section 32 – Nominations and objections — time and place of filing (Iowa Code 44.4(2)(a)(1,2))

Conforming code change to align challenges of nominations to the new filing deadline.

Section 33 – Withdrawals (Iowa Code 44.9(1))

Conforming code change.

Section 34 – Vacancies filled (Iowa Code 44.11)

Conforming code change.

DIVISION VII
Affidavits of Candidacy

Section 35 – Affidavit of candidacy. (Iowa Code 43.18(10))

NEW SUBSECTION – Adds to the affidavit of candidacy that the candidate is ineligible to appear on the same ballot for the same office other than as a candidate of the party on the affidavit.

Section 36 – Nominee’s right to place on ballot (Iowa Code 43.67(j))

NEW PARAGRAPH - Adds to the affidavit of candidacy that the candidate is ineligible to appear on the same ballot for the same office other than as a candidate of the party on the affidavit.

Section 37 – Certificate (Iowa Code 44.3(2))

NEW PARAGRAPH - Adds to the affidavit of candidacy that the candidate is ineligible to appear on the same ballot for the same office other than as a candidate of the nonparty political organization on the affidavit.

Section 38 – Affidavit of candidacy (Iowa Code 45.3)

NEW SUBSECTION - Adds to the affidavit of candidacy that the candidate is ineligible to appear on the same ballot for the same office other than as a candidate nominated by petition.

DIVISION VIII
Voter Registration

Section 39 – State registrar of voters (Iowa Code 47.7(2))

Authorizes the SOS to contract with state and federal government agencies and private entities to verify status of records in the statewide voter registration file. The Secretary may adopt rules for the use of federal and other state agency sources of information and allow county auditors the use of the source information to conduct voter registration maintenance.

The DOT shall transmit to the SOS a list of persons aged 17 years or older who has submitted documentation indicating that they are not citizens of the United States.

Section 40 – Voter identification cards — verification of voter registration information (Iowa Code 48A.10A(1,2))

Adds the DOT’s noncitizen identification files and expands the driver’s license files to the list of data the SOS compares the voter registration lists against.

Section 41 – (Iowa Code 48A.25A(2A))

NEW SUBSECTION – A voter registration record shall be designated as “unconfirmed” if the person self-reports to be a non-citizen on the voter registration form.

Section 42 – Cancellation of voter registration (Iowa Code 48A.30(1))

NEW PARAGRAPH – adds to the list of authorized reasons to cancel a voter’s registration is if they have provided a state or federal agency documentation that they are not a citizen.

Section 43 – Cancellation of voter registration (Iowa Code 48A.30(2))

Conforming code change to add reference to section 31.

Section 44 – Electronic registration records (Iowa Code 48A.37(2))

Adds “unconfirmed” status for voter registration records. Unconfirmed records are records that the SOS or county auditor has reliable source indicating that the registered voter is not qualified. Unconfirmed records shall be made “active” upon the voter providing evidence that they are qualified.

Section 45 – Ballot furnished to voter (Iowa Code 49.77(1)(a))

Adds affirmation of citizenship to the Voter’s Declaration of Eligibility when voting.

Section 46 – Examination on challenge (Iowa Code 49.80(2)(a))

NEW SUBPARAGRAPH – Adds to the list of reasons a voter may be challenged their citizenship status.

Section 47 – Special precinct board to determine challenges and canvass absentee ballot (Iowa Code 50.22(2))

Adds that ballots submitted to the special precinct board that have not been cured by the deadline shall be rejected.

DIVISION IX
Election Misconduct

Section 37 – Election misconduct — investigation (Iowa Code 39A.7)

Moves the investigation of election misconduct allegations back to county sheriffs or other law enforcement agency with jurisdiction. Upon completion of the investigation a report shall be submitted to the Attorney General and the SOS. Any information received by the SOS is confidential pursuant to Chapter 22.