

**SENATE BILL No. 65**

By Committee on Federal and State Affairs

1-23

AN ACT concerning irrigation districts; relating to the election of members of the board of directors thereof; specifying when such elections may be conducted by mail ballot; authorizing the board of directors to set the term for such elected members; amending K.S.A. 42-706 and *K.S.A. 2025 Supp. 25-432* and repealing the existing section sections.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

***Section 1. K.S.A. 2025 Supp. 25-432 is hereby amended to read as follows: 25-432. (a) Except as otherwise provided, an election shall not be conducted under this act unless:***

***(a)(1) The secretary of state approves a written plan for conduct of the election, including, but not limited to, a written timetable for the conduct of the election, submitted by the county election officer;***

***(b)(2) the election is nonpartisan;***

***(c)(3) the election is not one at which any candidate is elected, retained or recalled;***

***(d)(4) the election is not held on the same date as another election in which the qualified electors of that subdivision of government are eligible to cast ballots, except this restriction shall not apply to mail ballot elections held under K.S.A. 79-2925c, and amendments thereto, or elections held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March; and***

***(e)(5) the election is a question submitted election and all of the qualified electors of one of the following subdivisions of government are the only electors eligible to vote on such question:***

***(1)(A) Counties;***

***(2)(B) cities;***

***(3)(C) school districts, except in an election held pursuant to K.S.A. 72-635 et seq., and amendments thereto;***

***(4)(D) townships;***

***(5)(E) benefit districts organized under K.S.A. 31-301, and amendments thereto;***

***(6)(F) cemetery districts organized under K.S.A. 15-1013 or 17-1330, and amendments thereto;***

***(7)(G) community college districts organized under K.S.A. 71-1101 et seq., and amendments thereto;***

1       (8)(H) *fire districts organized under K.S.A. 19-3601 or 80-1512,*  
2 *and amendments thereto;*

3       (9)(I) *hospital districts;*

4       (10)(J) *improvement districts organized under K.S.A. 19-2753, and*  
5 *amendments thereto;*

6       (11)(K) *Johnson county park and recreation district organized*  
7 *under K.S.A. 19-2859, and amendments thereto;*

8       (12)(L) *water districts organized under K.S.A. 19-3501 et seq., and*  
9 *amendments thereto;*

10       (13)(M) *transportation development districts created pursuant to*  
11 *K.S.A. 12-17,140 et seq., and amendments thereto; or*

12       (14)(N) *any tract of land annexed pursuant to K.S.A. 12-521, and*  
13 *amendments thereto.*

14       (b) *The election of irrigation district directors pursuant to K.S.A. 42-*  
15 *706, and amendments thereto, may be conducted by mail ballot in*  
16 *accordance with this act.*

17       ~~Section 1.~~ **Sec. 2.** K.S.A. 42-706 is hereby amended to read as  
18 follows: 42-706. (a) The officers of ~~such an~~ *irrigation district established*  
19 *under K.S.A. 42-704, and amendments thereto,* shall be a board of  
20 directors consisting of three members who shall be persons entitled to vote  
21 as provided in subsection (g) and residents of a county in which ~~the such~~  
22 *irrigation district or a portion thereof is located, or a county adjoining a*  
23 *county in which such irrigation district or a portion thereof is located.* Such  
24 members shall hold office for a period of two, *three* or four years, such  
25 term of office being established by the board of directors by passage of a  
26 resolution, and each shall serve until a successor has been elected and  
27 qualified. The members of the board of directors first elected after the  
28 creation of an irrigation district shall hold their respective offices until the  
29 next regular election for the election of directors as provided in subsection  
30 (d), (e) or (f) ~~of this section,~~ except that the terms of the three directors  
31 shall be as provided in subsection (d) ~~or (e) of this section.~~

32       (b) The chief engineer of the division of water resources, after the  
33 incorporation of such irrigation district, shall establish and designate the  
34 polling place or places therein where the first election will be conducted  
35 and fix the time for such election within 60 days after the date of  
36 incorporation. In any irrigation district of more than 35,000 acres, the chief  
37 engineer of the division of water resources shall, prior to designating  
38 polling places, establish three voting areas within such district as equal as  
39 possible in acreage and shall designate the same as the first, second or  
40 third voting area. Such polling place or places may thereafter be changed  
41 by the board of directors, and the board may arrange for polling places  
42 outside the corporate boundaries of the district if such places are more  
43 convenient than locations within the district. Prior to the holding of the

1 first election in newly created districts, the chief engineer of the division of  
2 water resources shall appoint from the qualified electors of the district  
3 three persons for such election for each voting place who shall constitute  
4 boards of election for such district for such election. If the members  
5 appointed do not attend at the opening of the polls on the day of election,  
6 at the opening hour, the electors present at that hour shall elect from the  
7 electors present members of the election board necessary to fill the place  
8 of any absent member.

9 (c) ***Unless the board of directors adopts a resolution providing for***  
10 ***mail ballot elections under subsection (d)(5),*** the board of directors of  
11 every district of more than 35,000 acres ~~which~~ *that* was incorporated prior  
12 to the effective date of this act shall establish three voting areas within the  
13 district as equal as possible in acreage and designate the same as the first,  
14 second or third voting area. The board shall also establish and designate  
15 the polling place or places within each voting area, ~~or adopt a procedure~~  
16 ~~for election by mail ballot pursuant to subsection (d)(5).~~ At the first  
17 election held after the effective date of this act, a director shall be elected  
18 for the term length established by the board.

19 (d) (1) Except as provided in paragraph ~~(2)~~ (5), all elections shall be  
20 conducted in accordance with the general election laws of the state except  
21 as otherwise provided in this act. Advance voting as provided in article 11  
22 of chapter 25 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto,  
23 shall be provided for by the county election officers and boards of  
24 directors for those persons entitled to vote under subsection (g). The forms  
25 for the ballot envelope declaration as provided in K.S.A. 25-1120, and  
26 amendments thereto, and the applications for advance ballots as provided  
27 in K.S.A. 25-1122d, and amendments thereto, shall be modified to  
28 establish that such person is a qualified owner of irrigable land within the  
29 district. After polls are closed the election boards shall proceed to canvass  
30 the votes cast thereat, shall certify to the county election officer of the  
31 county in which all or the greater part of the population of the irrigation  
32 district is located and the chief engineer the result of such election. The  
33 clerks shall then securely wrap the ballots cast at such elections and shall  
34 express or mail the same by registered mail to the county election officer  
35 of the county in which all or the greater part of the population of the  
36 irrigation district is located. The county election officer shall canvass the  
37 ballots, verify the results and declare the person receiving the highest  
38 number of votes duly elected as director, except that at the first election  
39 after creation of a district the county election officer of the county in  
40 which all or the greater part of the population of the irrigation district is  
41 located shall declare the three persons receiving the highest number of  
42 votes duly elected as directors ~~except that in districts, or, if such district is~~  
43 divided into three voting areas, the person receiving the highest number of

1 votes in each voting area shall be *declared* duly elected as director. Such  
2 county election officer shall immediately mail, to each person elected to  
3 the office of director a certificate of election signed by such officer.

4 (2) The directors shall thereupon qualify and enter upon the duties of  
5 their office. Directors shall qualify by taking and subscribing to an oath of  
6 office of substantially the same tenor as oath of office prescribed for  
7 county officials. Each member of the board of directors shall execute an  
8 official bond in the sum of \$1,000 which oath and bond shall be filed with  
9 the county election officer of the county in which all or the greater part of  
10 the population of the irrigation district is located. The treasurer of each  
11 irrigation district shall execute to the district a corporate surety bond in an  
12 amount at least equal to 125% of the amount, as near as can be  
13 ascertained, that shall be in such person's hands as treasurer at any one  
14 time. The amount and sufficiency of the bond of the treasurer shall be  
15 determined by the county election officer. Upon approval of the bond, the  
16 county election officer shall endorse such approval thereon and file the  
17 same in the office of the county election officer and shall immediately  
18 notify the county treasurer of the county in which the registered office of  
19 the irrigation district is located of such approval and filing.

20 (3) In the event of the breach of any condition of the treasurer's bond,  
21 the president and secretary of the board shall cause a suit to be commenced  
22 thereon in the name of the irrigation district. It shall not be necessary to  
23 include the treasurer as a party to the action and the money collected shall  
24 be applied to the use of the district, as the same should have been applied  
25 by the treasurer. Should the president and secretary neglect or refuse to  
26 prosecute such a suit, then any person entitled to vote as provided in  
27 subsection (g) may cause such suit to be instituted. Premiums on surety  
28 bonds for such directors and treasurers of irrigation districts shall be paid  
29 by the district out of its general funds.

30 (4) In case the office of any director shall become vacant the  
31 remaining members of the board shall fill the vacancy by appointment. A  
32 director appointed to fill a vacancy shall serve the unexpired term of the  
33 director whose term such person was appointed to fill.

34 (2)(5) For any election except the election required in subsection (b),  
35 the board of directors may adopt a ~~procedure~~ **resolution** providing for the  
36 election of members by mail ballot *in an even-numbered or odd-numbered*  
37 *year. Such procedure shall require the board to mail ballots to all persons*  
38 *entitled to vote, to receive and tabulate the ballots, to canvass the election*  
39 *and to certify the results to the county election officer* **Any such resolution**  
40 **shall be submitted to the county election officer of each county**  
41 **containing territory of the district. The election shall be held on the first**  
42 **Tuesday in March in each even-numbered or odd-numbered year as**  
43 **specified in such resolution. Not less than 90 days prior to the date of**

1 *each such election, the county election officers of each county*  
2 *containing territory of the district shall jointly file a mail ballot election*  
3 *plan with the secretary of state. No person shall file as a candidate for a*  
4 *position on the board of directors of such district after 12:00 p.m. 10*  
5 *weeks prior to the date of the election. Except as otherwise provided in*  
6 *this section, all elections held pursuant to this paragraph shall be*  
7 *conducted in accordance with the general election laws of this state and*  
8 *the mail ballot election act, K.S.A. 25-431 et seq., and amendments*  
9 *thereto.* The irrigation district shall be responsible for the direct expenses  
10 of conducting the election. ~~The ballot envelope used for mailing ballots~~  
11 ~~shall contain a declaration establishing that the person who signs the~~  
12 ~~declaration is a qualified owner of irrigable land within the district. In the~~  
13 ~~resolution providing for the election of members by mail ballot, the board~~  
14 ~~of directors shall establish the term of such members to be a period of two,~~  
15 ~~three or four years.~~

16 (e) (1) All regular elections of directors of irrigation districts shall be  
17 held the Tuesday following the first Monday in November in odd-  
18 numbered years.

19 (2) Any districts organized after the regular election shall hold its  
20 election at the next regular election following incorporation of the district  
21 and, at this election three directors shall be elected and the person  
22 receiving the highest number of votes shall serve for a term of four years,  
23 the persons receiving the second and third highest number of votes shall  
24 serve for a term of two years. In case the first election after creation of a  
25 district is held between June 1 of any year and the day preceding the  
26 Tuesday following the first Monday in November of the next succeeding  
27 odd-numbered year, the next regular election shall be held in the second  
28 succeeding odd-numbered year. At each subsequent regular election, ~~only~~  
29 ~~one director~~ *directors* shall be elected ~~each year~~ for a term of four years.

30 (3) Any person desiring to be a candidate for election to the board of  
31 directors shall file a candidate's declaration of intention with the county  
32 election officer of the county in which all or the greater part of the  
33 population of the district is located. Such candidate's filing shall utilize the  
34 procedures provided in K.S.A. 25-21a03, and amendments thereto, and  
35 K.S.A. 25-205, and amendments thereto. The county election officer shall  
36 prepare the ballot, and place the names thereon in alphabetical order and  
37 shall supply election officials with necessary ballots and polling books at  
38 the irrigation district's expense. At least five days before any election, the  
39 county clerks of the various counties within which a portion of the district  
40 is located, shall cause to be ascertained the names of all persons entitled to  
41 vote as provided in subsection (g) and shall furnish lists thereof to each  
42 election board within such county and to the secretary of the board of  
43 directors of the district. Notice of the time and places of holding of the

1 general election, shall be published by the county election officer in a  
2 newspaper of general circulation in the district in accordance with K.S.A.  
3 25-105, and amendments thereto. The results of all special or bond  
4 elections shall be made available to the secretary of the district. All  
5 expenses of election, not otherwise provided for herein, shall be paid for  
6 out of the general funds of the irrigation district. Election officials shall  
7 receive the same compensation as provided under general election laws.

8 *(4) The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to any election*  
9 *conducted pursuant to subsection (d)(5) or (f).*

10 (f) In lieu of the election procedures provided in this section  
11 pertaining to regular elections of directors in accordance with the general  
12 election laws of the state, the board of directors of any irrigation district of  
13 less than 35,000 acres in size may call an annual meeting of all persons  
14 entitled to vote as provided in subsection (g) for the purpose of electing  
15 directors. Such annual meeting shall be held on the first Tuesday in March.  
16 Notice of the time and place of holding said annual meeting shall be given  
17 in some newspaper or newspapers of general circulation in the district for  
18 one issue at least 30 days prior to date of such meeting. Elections at the  
19 annual meeting shall be by ballot, with absentee voting as provided under  
20 subsection (d) ~~of this section~~. All persons desiring to be voted upon as  
21 director shall at least 30 days before the day of holding the annual meeting  
22 file such person's name with the secretary of the board of directors of the  
23 district, affixed to a statement that such person desires such person's name  
24 to be placed on the ballot as a candidate for member of board of directors  
25 of the district. The board of directors shall appoint three owners of  
26 irrigable land in the district to serve as an election board at the annual  
27 meeting. After the votes are cast at the annual meeting the election board  
28 shall proceed to canvass the votes and shall certify to the county election  
29 officer of the county in which all or the greater part of the population of  
30 the irrigation district is located and the chief engineer the result of such  
31 election. All provisions of this section not inconsistent with the provisions  
32 of subsection (f) shall apply to the election of directors at the annual  
33 meeting.

34 (g) (1) Until such time as assessments are made in the district  
35 pursuant to K.S.A. 42-715, and amendments thereto, those persons entitled  
36 to vote shall be "qualified owners of land" within the irrigation district, as  
37 such term is defined in K.S.A. 42-701, and amendments thereto, and who  
38 are otherwise qualified electors.

39 (2) After lands have been assessed in the district pursuant to K.S.A.  
40 42-715, and amendments thereto, those persons entitled to vote shall be  
41 "qualified owners of land" within the irrigation district as such term is  
42 defined in K.S.A. 42-701, and amendments thereto, which has been  
43 assessed pursuant to K.S.A. 42-715, and amendments thereto, and who are

1 otherwise qualified electors. For voting purposes, any person entitled to  
2 vote under this subsection who owns land in more than one voting area  
3 shall vote in the voting area ~~which~~ *that* includes the greatest portion of  
4 such person's land.

5 (h) As used in this section, the term "qualified electors" ~~shall include~~  
6 *includes* a person who is the legal qualified owner of irrigable land or a  
7 person, who is authorized, in writing, to vote for a trust, corporation,  
8 association or partnership ~~which~~ *that* is the legal qualified owner of  
9 irrigable land. Such person is not required to be a resident of the district.  
10 Such trust, corporation, association or partnership shall be allowed only  
11 one vote. The person authorized by such entity to vote shall be someone  
12 who is not otherwise entitled to a vote under this section.

13 ~~Sec. 2.~~ **3.** K.S.A. 42-706 ~~is~~ *and K.S.A. 2025 Supp. 25-432 are* hereby  
14 repealed.

15 ~~Sec. 3.~~ **4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its  
16 publication in the statute book.