

If the notified counties reciprocate, a special election would be held in both counties within 90 days, on the same date, for a vote on the question of consolidation.

Following a vote to consolidate, HB 465 would establish that the county judge/executive of each consolidating county establish a transition committee to divide the new county into magisterial districts; if a commission form of governing was selected the county judge/executive would establish commissioner districts at the same time. Commissioners and magistrates, a name for the new county, and a new county seat would all be voted on at the same time. The newly-selected county seat would remain the county seat for at least 10 years; county government buildings in the former county seats would be required to be maintained as branch offices of the new county for a period of at least 10 years.

HB 465 Section 1 (5) would establish that “[a]ll general costs associated with” the special consolidation elections would be paid by the state, including publication costs for legal notices in each county.

The bill would provide that each former county would become a special taxing district until all debt of the former county is paid off. Any surplus funds in a former county must be spent in the territory of the former county from which the taxes were paid, or returned to the taxpayers of that former county.

HB 465 would have an indeterminable fiscal impact on counties that choose to consolidate. The bill does not define or identify what are “general costs” of a special election to consolidate which would be paid by the state. A special election held on other than a regular election day would incur the same types of costs as those of a regular election. Precinct election workers would be hired and trained, ballots would be printed, and voting machines would be set up and programmed. The costs of a special election vary with the number of voter precincts in a county. A recent sampling of several counties of varying size resulted in a range between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per-precinct costs for the 2020 general election. Final costs for a county vary greatly depending on the size and nature of the county, the nature of the election, and state cost reimbursement. For example, in Kenton County, with 423 precincts, a special election to consider consolidation would cost at least \$634,500 (423 precincts x \$1500/precinct = \$634,500). The Kentucky County Clerks Association believes that the new duty imposed on county clerks, to certify the sufficiency of petitions initiating consolidation, in some counties would require hiring additional staff and so increase expenses over the estimated \$1500-\$2000 per precinct.

Maintaining former government buildings as branch offices for 10 years would have an indeterminable negative fiscal impact on the consolidated county.

Part III: Differences to Local Government Mandate Statement from Prior Versions

Part II addresses the bill as introduced.

Data Source(s): Kentucky County Clerks Association; various county clerks; LRC Staff

Preparer: Mary Stephens **Reviewer:** KHC **Date:** 3/3/20

