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Elections panel estimates \$650,000 state cost for recall efforts

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By Patrick Marley of the Journal Sentinel

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Madison - State election officials anticipate they will need an extra \$650,000 next year for a new wave of recall efforts that will require them to review petitions with perhaps 1.5 million signatures.

Those costs would go toward hiring 50 temporary workers, renting office space to house them and the petitions, and running advertisements about the state's new requirement that voters show photo identification at the polls.

The preliminary estimates from the state Government Accountability Board do not include the recall costs for local officials, which are expected to be much higher than those for the state if enough signatures are gathered to hold elections.

The board is still developing estimates for what the costs would be for local officials. Recall elections this year for nine state senators cost state and local taxpayers \$2.1 million, according to the board.

The board filed its expected costs with the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee on Thursday, two days after Democrats filed paperwork to try to recall Gov. Scott Walker, Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch and four Republican state senators.

The board's estimates presume efforts will be launched to try to recall two other state senators.

In a letter to the lawmakers who head the finance committee, the board's director, Kevin Kennedy, said he was not yet seeking additional

money but wanted to alert them of the likely costs.

In all, he is expecting his board would need an additional \$652,699. Of that, about \$252,000 would go toward personnel, including hiring the 50 temporary workers for eight weeks; another \$250,000 would go toward running statewide television and radio ads about the voter ID law; and about \$25,000 would go toward renting 4,400 square feet of office space for three months. The rest would go toward equipment, litigation materials and other expenses.

The voter ID ads would run in the two weeks before any recall primaries and the four weeks before general recall elections.

For this year's recalls, the board had to review nearly 216,000 signatures that spanned nearly 30,000 pages of petitions. For the next wave, the board expects to have to analyze 1.5 million signatures appearing on more than 100,000 pages.

The board will have 31 days to review the petitions, which are expected to be delivered in mid-January. Kennedy said the board probably would ask a court to extend that so the board has at least 60 days to review them.

Sixteen workers would be assigned to reviewing the petitions, and 50 others would be hired temporarily to assist them.

The earlier set of recall elections and the possible new wave were sparked by the stances of elected officials on Walker's successful effort to sharply limit collective bargaining for most public employees. This year, six Republicans and three Democrats in the state Senate were targeted, with Democrats gaining two additional seats in the elections.

Now, recall attempts are under way against Republican Sens. Scott Fitzgerald of Juneau, Pam Galloway of Wausau, Terry Moulton of Chippewa Falls and Van Wanggaard of Racine. Republicans have said they may try to recall Democratic senators later.

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