

## RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS SECTION – LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

### Executive Summary: 2008 Proposed Budget – Election Commission

1. The Election Commission's operating budget increased by 93% between the 2007 Budget and 2008 Proposed Budget, and the 2008 funding level is 27% greater than 2004 and 69% greater than 2000 (page 2).
2. The increase between the 2000/2004 and 2008 funding levels provides for increases in staffing levels necessary to handle the anticipated large volume of registrations and absentee voters in 2008, and avoid the issues that were encountered during the 2004 elections. There has been a significant increase in voter registration activities and requests for absentee ballots since the 2000 Presidential Election and Wisconsin's identification as a swing state (pages 2 and 4).
3. Two new positions will be added to Election Commission full-time staff in 2008: the *Elections Recruiter/Trainer* position was created in the 2007 Budget and will be filled in November, 2007; and the *Management Services Specialist* position will be created with adoption of the 2008 Budget (page 3).
4. *Facility Rental* increased 109% to \$24,000 between 2007 and the 2008 Proposed Budget. The Commission pays approximately \$6,000 in polling place rental fees for each election. There were 2 elections in 2007 and will be 4 in 2008, accounting for the substantial increase (page 3).
5. *Other Operating Services* increased by 95% between 2007 and the 2008 Budget, from \$552,800 to \$1,079,556. Included in this item is payments to election workers for 4 elections (versus 2 in 2006), including compensation for training, absentee ballot processing, poll worker and voter registration activities, printing and postage expenses, and all Election Day polling place and field supplies (pages 3-4).
6. Expected voter turnout for the 2008 Presidential election, in November, is equivalent to the 2004 turnout of 277,535 voters (page 4).
7. The Commission identified several issues that have impacted the capacity and workload of the department, which the Commission plans to address in 2008 through a number of key initiatives. These include: increasing temporary staffing levels; educating poll workers; and addressing issues relating to the Statewide Voter Registration System, voting equipment and timely processing of centralized processing of absentee ballots (pages 4-6).

**Research & Analysis Section – Legislative Reference Bureau**

**2008 Proposed Budget Summary: Election Commission**

Expense Category	2006 Actual	2007 Budget	2006-2007 Change	2008 Proposed	2007-2008 Change	2004 Actual	2000 Actual
<b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>	\$1,874,080	\$1,368,875	-27%	\$2,636,184	+93%	\$2,080,850 (27% less than 2008)	\$1,557,010 (69% less than 2008)
<b>O&amp;M FTE Positions</b>	19.16	12.02	-7.14	23.11	+11.09	18.29	53.32
<b>Authorized Positions</b>	110	37	-73	113	+76	110	1,717*

\* Until 2002 poll workers were paid out of the salary account. Funding for the payment of poll workers is now included operating services.

The Election Commission staff registers City of Milwaukee voters and conducts all elections in the City of Milwaukee. The Board of Election Commissioners is composed of 3 citizen members representing the 2 political parties receiving the most votes for Governor in the City in the last gubernatorial election. Staff assistance is provided by an Executive Director, 6 other full-time employees (current staffing level) and temporary employees utilized at election time. Two elections are usually held during odd numbered years and four generally in even numbered years.

**Historical Information**

1. Redistricting action taken by the Common Council in 2001 resulted in a reduction in the number of election wards, from 335 to 314, and the number of polling locations to 202. In the 2004 Budget, the citywide reduction of aldermanic districts from 17 to 15 required a change in aldermanic district boundaries. As a result, the Election Commission revised the number and locations of polling locations according to the new boundaries.
2. Beginning with the 2002 Budget, poll workers are paid as vendors from the Other Operating Services account and not from the staff salary account.
3. In 2002, the federal government enacted the **Help America Vote Act (HAVA)** to make reforms and improvements to voting systems and voter access in all states. HAVA mandates include ensuring that all voter registration records are maintained within a single, statewide voter registration system, that all polling sites meet ADA accessibility requirements, and that voting equipment be made available to assist people with disabilities to mark their ballots privately and independently. The City of Milwaukee has been compliant with these 3 HAVA mandates since August, 2006.
4. In response to HAVA, and in order to receive federal funding, the Commission has converted the City’s voter registration database to the Wisconsin State Elections Board’s **Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS)**- a computerized statewide voter registration system that is a single database for all registered voters.
5. In order to alleviate the issues during the 2004 elections, the Mayor formed the Election Task Force in 2005. In June, 2005, the Election Task Force issued recommendations related to voter registration, absentee ballots, polling locations and poll workers. The Commission states all

Task Force goals have either been fully implemented or are currently in the process of implementation, namely centralized processing of absentee ballots.

## **PERSONNEL**

### **Number of Authorized and Funded Positions**

Changes in number of positions, 2007 Budget and 2008 Proposed Budget:

	2007 Budget	2008 Proposed	Change	2004 Actual	2000 Actual
O&M Funded FTE Positions	12.02	23.11	+11.09	18.29	53.32
Authorized Positions	37	113	+76	110	1,717*

\* Until 2002 poll workers were paid out of the salary account. Funding for the payment of poll workers is now included operating services.

### **Vacancies**

- *The Poll Worker Coordinator (Program Assistant I).* Vacant since February, 2007. A staff person is currently performing duties with a temporary assignment to the position. This position will be filled as the Department of Employee Relations completes the current Program Assistant I testing process.
- *Elections Recruiter/Trainer.* This position was created in the 2007 Budget to perform duties related to recruiting and training poll workers, and the Commission anticipates it will be filled in December, 2007.

### **New Position**

- *Management Services Specialist.* The 2008 Proposed Budget adds this new position, and funds it at Salary Grade 3 for the entire year. Its duties will include oversight of campaign finance and candidate filing, data oversight of SVRS and quality assurance of election activities.

**Temporary Office Assistants:** The 2008 Budget provides 95 positions for the 2008 elections, which equates to 10.45 FTEs. Staffing levels were calculated with an assessment of tasks and necessary staffing levels for the entire year.

**Temporary Election Laborer:** The 2008 Budget provides 6 positions for the 2008 elections, which correlates to 0.66 FTEs. Staffing levels were calculated as above.

## **LINE ITEMS**

- *Facility Rental* increased 109% to \$24,000 between the 2007 Budget and the 2008 Proposed Budget. The Commission pays approximately \$6,000 in polling place rental fees for each election. There were 2 elections in 2007 and there will be 4 in 2008, accounting for the substantial increase. The Commission utilizes city-owned facilities (Health Department, Milwaukee Public Libraries and Milwaukee Water Works) for training facilities, and due to the level of cooperation received from these City departments, there is no expense related to training facility rental. Approximately 70% of polling sites are city-owned, 12% are county-owned and 18% are privately rented.
- *Other Operating Services* increased by 95% between the 2007 Budget and the 2008 Proposed Budget, from \$552,800 to \$1,079,556. Included in this item is payments to election workers,

including compensation for training, absentee ballot processing, poll worker and voter registration activities, printing and postage expenses, and all Election Day polling place and field supplies. The 2004 actual expenditure for this item was \$1,041,606, which is 4% lower than the 2008 proposed amount.

- No equipment purchases are anticipated in 2008. The 2007 Budget provided \$55,000 for an Absentee Ballot Tabulator. This item has yet to be purchased.

**REVENUE**

Projected revenue is \$1,800, which is derived from the sale of poll lists. This has decreased significantly from previous years as a result of the 2006 transition from a local voter registration database to the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS). Historically, the most frequently requested polling lists have been frequent voter lists and voter lists sorted by address. It is not possible for the Commission to generate either of these reports through SVRS. An additional \$1,000 in revenue is attributed to the Election Commission, and included in the citywide miscellaneous revenue account.

**2008 ELECTIONS**

**2008 EXPECTED TURNOUT**

Four elections are scheduled in 2008: Presidential Preference and General, Mayoral and Aldermanic races and County Supervisors, as well as other state and federal elections. Voter turnout is expected as follows:

<b>Election Date</b>	<b>February 2008</b>	<b>April 2008</b>	<b>September 2008</b>	<b>November 2008</b>	<b>November 2004</b>
<b>Election</b>	Spring Primary	Spring General	Fall Primary	November General	November General
<b>Expected Turnout</b>	137,362	163,026	94,643	277,535	ACTUAL: 277,535

**PREPARATION FOR THE 2008 ELECTIONS**

To prepare for 2008 elections, staff evaluated performance during 2006 and 2007 elections and assessed challenges the department faced during the 2004 Presidential election. Most notable shortfalls during the 2004 election that the Commission plans on addressing in 2008 are: the need for more temporary staffing prior to elections, in order to complete processing of registrations and absentee ballots, and the need for more poll workers at the City’s busiest wards.

To implement long-range strategic goals, a number of key initiatives were established and funding was accordingly increased in the 2008 Proposed Budget. The increase between the 2000/2004 and 2008 funding levels provides for increases in staffing levels necessary to handle the anticipated large volume of registrations and absentee ballot applications in 2008, and avoid the issues that were encountered during the 2004 elections. There has been a significant increase in voter registration activities and requests for absentee ballots since the 2000 Presidential Election and Wisconsin’s identification as a swing state, and the large number of registration drives and push for absentee voting was not as significant in the 2000 and 2004 elections.

## ISSUES AND KEY INITIATIVES FOR 2008

The Commission identified several issues that have impacted the capacity and workload of the department which the Commission plans to address in 2008 through a number of key initiatives. These were presented in a communication file to the Judiciary and Legislation Committee on July 23, 2007.

1. *Issue: Insufficient staff to meet the anticipated need during 2008 elections.*

**Strategy:**

- **Increasing Temporary Staffing Levels:** The increase in 2008 funding for temporary office staff and poll workers attempts to handle the anticipated increase in registrations, absentee ballots and voter turnout. The Commission plans on developing and launching a comprehensive poll worker recruitment campaign, and anticipates recruiting and training 1,800 additional election inspectors throughout the fall of 2007 and early 2008 for assignment during the Spring and Fall elections.
- **Pool of Inspectors:** While state law requires a minimum of 5 inspectors at each single-ward facility, the Commission has determined this level of staffing to be insufficient for most City polling sites. At single-ward sites, the Commission strives to assign 6 inspectors for lower turnout elections and 7 for higher turnout elections. Given the significant number of Election Day inspector no-shows, the Commission will maintain a reserve pool of between 50 and 150 inspectors.
- **New Elections Recruiter/Trainer position:** Created in the 2007 Budget, this position will play an integral role in ensuring that polling sites will be staffed with a sufficient number of capable people.
- The Commission is currently working with the Common Council to pass legislation that will implement an **Adopt-a-Site** program, whereby groups representing a charitable organization may fully staff, or “adopt”, a polling location, and donate wages to the charitable organization. This type of program, which includes additional opportunities for private sector business and corporate involvement, has proven successful in other communities throughout the country, and may be accomplished administratively.
- Additionally, the Commission has made significant efforts to **recruit bilingual** (particularly Spanish and Hmong speaking) election workers for assignment to sites with the City’s predominantly non-English speaking monolingual communities. These efforts have involved continued outreach to La Causa, UMOS and the Hmong American Friendship Association. Additionally, voter registration applications, with instructions, have been made available in Spanish and Hmong.

2. *Issue: Increased need to educate poll workers, especially with changing federal and state laws.*

**Strategy:** While the Election Commission has been successful at increasing the quantity of election workers, the skill set of workers is problematic. Election laws and procedures have changed significantly in the last 3 years, and many experienced election workers have shown resistance to change or have resigned. This has created a knowledge void at many polling places. Many individuals with the necessary skill set or management experience are not willing or able to take a vacation day from their employment to work at a polling site.

3. *Issue: Problems relating to the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS).* In response to HAVA, and in order to receive federal funding, SVRS has been designed and implemented into a

computerized statewide voter registration system that is a single database for all registered voters as of June 27, 2006. The Election Commission has partnered with the State Elections Board to implement the system, and received a new version in June. Problems with these systems have been experienced throughout the country.

The Commission identified numerous concerns with the new system, including slowness of the system, cost of operations, difficulty of report writing function and the problems associated with the absentee ballot components. For example, it takes one person approximately 4 times as long to process each registration.

**Strategy:** The Commission documents problems with the system and is advocating with the State Elections Board for an effective long-term resolution to system problems. Temporary staffing levels have been increased, and the newly created Management Services Specialist will have a key role in the oversight of the City's SVRS data.

**4. Issue: *Untimely processing and mishandling of absentee ballots.***

**Strategy: Implementing Centralized Processing of Absentee Ballots.**

Due to a recent change in state law, Wisconsin municipalities will now have the opportunity to implement centralized processing of absentee ballots. This system will eliminate the need to deliver and process absentee ballots at polling sites on Election Day. Rather, all absentee ballots will be systematically processed at one of the City's municipal warehouses- the location of which will be publicized and open to the public.

The Commission is working toward implementing centralized ballot processing procedures, and reviewing and revising all in-office procedures relating to the processing of absentee ballots and procedures for nursing home absentee ballots. It is also working to provide a more comprehensive training to temporary and permanent staff that may respond to callers with absentee ballot-related questions. The Commission will also collaborate with the State Elections Board to resolve on-going problems associated with absentee ballot SVRS program component.

Results from the centrally located tabulator will be publicly available at the site where the ballots are being processed immediately following the close of the polls. Centralized processing of absentee ballots is cost-neutral.

The 2007 Budget provided \$55,000 for an absentee ballot tabulator, but due to changing technology, the Commission will implement centralized processing using existing tabulating machines. Funding allocated for the ballot tabulator was applied to the purchase of additional voting machines and memory packs to be used during the 2008 centralized absentee ballot processing.

**5. Issue: *Problems with HAVA equipment.***

**Strategy:** As required by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), the Commission implemented use of the AutoMark at all polling sites beginning with the September 2006 election. Initial problems with the equipment included poor calibration of the ballot markers, election programming that was not compatible with the City's ballot and problematic ink cartridges. The Commission has addressed these problems with the manufacturer and does not anticipate further problems, and plans to test all machines prior to each election. Additionally, all HAVA voting equipment will be serviced prior to the 2008 elections.

**6. Issue: Overcrowding, missing or incorrect signage and accessibility issues at polling sites.**

**Strategy:** Each polling site is ADA-accessible, but, notwithstanding, each polling site is currently being reviewed and assessed by the Election Services Coordinator. A written plan regarding space, signage, accessibility, parking and equipment needs will be completed for each site, and information about accessibility will be posted on the Commission's web site. The authority to authorize the use of space varies from facility to facility. At Milwaukee Public Schools, the principals most often determine the assignment of voting space.

**7. Issue: Increased public and media scrutinizing of campaign finance reports.**

**Strategy:** Encourage on-line reporting with the goal of increasing accuracy and transparency of campaign finance reports. Instructions and spreadsheets are given on the Commission's website, and the Commission has invited the State Elections Board and the Milwaukee County Election Commission to provide a collaborative training to all elected office holders and Spring election candidates and their Treasurers.

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