

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS SECTION – LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

Executive Summary: 2009 Proposed Budget – Election Commission

1. The Election Commission's operating budget decreases from \$2,636,184 to \$1,489,302, or by 44.3% between the 2008 Budget and 2009 Proposed Budget. (Page 2)
2. In the 2009 Proposed Budget, there are 20 authorized positions, which is 93 less than those authorized for 2008. (Page 2)
3. There is one vacant position in the Election Commission -- *Management Services Specialist*. This position was created in the 2008 Budget. Funding for this position is eliminated for 2009. The Election Commission can manage 2009 elections without this position. The position authority is maintained in case the position is needed to support elections in 2010. (Page 3)
4. The Proposed Budget includes \$40,000 for *Professional Services*. This funding will be used for retaining a professional data entry firm to assist with the voter database. (Page 3)
5. *Facility Rental* increases from \$12,000 in the 2008 Budget to \$57,000 in the 2009 Proposed Budget. This account includes \$50,000 to lease a new document warehouse and a small field office. (Page 3).
6. The allocation for *Other Operating Services* decreases by 54% between the 2008 Budget and the 2009 Proposed Budget, from \$976,548 to \$445,141. Included in this item is payments to election workers for 2 elections (versus 4 in 2008), 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. (Page 3)
7. No equipment purchases are anticipated by the department in 2009. (Page 4)
8. Two elections are scheduled in 2009. The estimated voter turnout for the February 17 Spring Primary Election is 12,000 - 14,000 whereas the estimated turnout for the April 7 Spring Election is 32,000 - 35,000. (Page 4)
9. The 2009 Proposed Budget estimates that the Election Commission will generate \$500, a decrease of \$1,300, 72.2% from the 2008 Budget of \$1,800. (Page 4)

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September 29, 2008

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2009 Proposed Budget Summary: Election Commission

Expense Category	2007 Actual	2008 Budget	2007-2008 Change	2009 Proposed	2008-2009 Change
Total Operating Expenditures	\$1,225,688	\$2,636,184	+115.1%	\$1,321,587	-49.9%
O&M FTE Positions	17.72	23.11	+5.39	11.80	+11.31
Authorized Positions	37	113	+76	20	-93

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 address the issues stemming 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 been fully implemented, including centralized processing of absentee ballots.

PERSONNEL

Number of Authorized and Funded Positions

Changes in number of positions, 2008 Budget and 2009 Proposed Budget:

	2008 Budget	2009 Proposed	Change
O&M Funded FTE Positions	23.11	17.41	-5.7
Authorized Positions	113	20	-93

Vacancies

- *Management Services Specialist.* There is currently one vacant position in the Election Commission. The 2008 Budget added this new position. The duties of this position include oversight of campaign finance and candidate filing, data oversight of SVRS and quality assurance of election activities. However, duties initially anticipated for this position have been maintained by the Elections Services Manager and the Executive Director, or have been allocated to temporary office support positions. Thus, funding for this position is eliminated for 2009. The Election Commission can manage in 2009 without this position. The position authority is maintained in case this position is needed to support elections in 2010.

LINE ITEMS

- The 2009 Proposed Budget contains \$40,000 for *Professional Services*. This funding will be used for retaining a professional data-entry firm to assist with entering voter registration applications and absentee ballot applications with data clean-up, primarily purging the registered voter database of voters that have moved from the municipality, are deceased or are inactive.
- *Facility Rental* increases from \$12,000 in the 2008 Budget to \$57,000 in the 2009 Proposed Budget. This account includes \$50,000 to lease a new document warehouse and small field office. The Election Commission will share this space with DOA's Document and Services Section. In addition, the Commission pays approximately \$6,000 in polling place rental fees for each election. There were 4 elections in 2008, and there will be 2 in 2009, accounting for the substantial decrease. 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, 10% are County-owned and 19% are privately rented.
- The allocation for *Other Operating Services* decreases by 54.4% between the 2008 Budget and the 2009 Proposed Budget, from \$976,548 to \$445,141. Included in this item are 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.

- No equipment purchases are anticipated by the Election Commission in 2009. The 2008 Budget also provided no funding for equipment purchases.

REVENUE

The projected revenue for 2009 is \$500, which is derived from the sale of poll lists. This amount is \$1,300 less than the amount budgeted in 2008. Most of the candidates for School Board and Circuit Court in the 2 elections scheduled for 2009 will be running unopposed and, thus, have little need to purchase records from the Election Commission.

2009 ELECTIONS

2009 EXPECTED TURNOUT

Two elections are scheduled in 2009: Spring Primary and Spring General Elections for Municipal Judges and School Board races. Voter turnout is expected as follows:

Election Date	February 17, 2009	April 7, 2009
Election	Spring Primary	Spring General
Expected Turnout	12,000-14,000	32,000-35,000

ISSUES FOR 2009

Recruitment

1. The recruitment of poll workers is on-going. The 2009 election worker recruitment plan includes outreach to corporations, community organizations and to the general public. Corporate and community organization recruitment strategies include personal contacts from the Poll Worker Recruiter/Trainer as well as the Executive Director. General public recruitment strategies are primarily focused on the implementation of a media campaign designed to raise public awareness of the role of election workers and the need for support in the November 4 election. Media strategies include the dissemination of press releases, public service announcements on MATA and the City Channel, and radio talk-show appearances. To date, the Election Commission has received several hundred applications. With the full implementation of recruitment efforts, an additional 1,000 workers will be recruited and trained during September and October.
2. Historically, the Presidential Election has increased public awareness and participation in elections. Recruitment efforts aimed at ensuring full staffing for the November 4 election will infuse an estimated 1,500 new election workers into the election worker pool. Additional workers should reflect the diversity of the City of Milwaukee, including age diversity. However, the Commission states that due to the time commitment required, most will be new retirees and senior-aged. At least half will only be interested in working the Presidential Election. The remaining number will receive long-term permanent assignment status and will be used to replace current poll workers that may be “aging out” of their roles.
3. The Commission reports that every effort is made to recruit bilingual poll workers. Recruitment efforts include partnership efforts with various community organizations,

such as Voces de la Frontera. Bilingual poll workers are assigned to the City's more heavily populated Spanish- and Hmong-speaking wards. Additionally, voting place signs have been translated for posting at the sites representing the wards with the highest concentration of Hispanic voters.

4. Approximately 300 City employees functioned as Chief Inspectors and Inspectors during the Spring 2008 elections. A larger number (600) is anticipated for the November 4 election. Recruitment occurs through word-of-mouth, e-mail and announcements from the mayor's office and the department heads.

Rates of Pay for Election Workers

Election Workers are budgeted to receive a pay increase in 2009 from the current \$85 rate of pay to \$100 per election. The last review of election worker salaries in cities of comparable size was conducted by the Budget Office in 2007 and the Election Commission in 2006. Currently, Milwaukee's rate of pay is at the low end of the compensation range. The anticipated pay increase would move election worker salaries closer to mid-range.

Adopt-a-Site Program

To date, 15 voting sites have been adopted. Additional groups have expressed interest. However, the Election Commission has "capped" this program to ensure the effective management of program participants. This program was marketed through a mailing to local community-based organizations and to private organizations with facilities used as voting sites.

Statewide Voter registration System (SVRS)

In response to the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and in order to receive federal funding, SVRS has been designed and implemented into a statewide vote registration system that is a single database for all registered voters. The Election Commission has partnered with the State Elections Board to implement the system. Numerous concerns were initially identified by the Commission, including slowness of the system, cost of operations, difficulty of report-writing function and problems associated with absentee ballot components. The Commission states that most issues relating to SVRS have been settled. However, in August 2008, the Election Commission began "live" operations on the SVRS interfaces with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections and the federal Social Security Administration. The Commissioner reports that problems with the interfaces have not been significant, but additional monitoring will be required.

Central Processing of Absentee Ballots

The centralized absentee ballot process was fully implemented beginning with the February 2008 election. The Election Commission has employed this system for processing absentee ballots for three consecutive elections without problem. This system will be used throughout 2009 and all future elections.

2009 INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are planned by the Election Commission for 2009:

1. Maintaining candidate filings for the Spring municipal elections.
2. Conducting 2 elections: the Spring Primary and Spring Election.
3. Assessing and revising the department's system and procedures, based on the outcomes of the 2008 Presidential Election, in preparation for upcoming elections.
4. Conducting clean-up activity of election-related data, including filing registration applications, purging the registration database of inactive voters, inactive absentee ballot voters, etc.
5. Assessing the performance of election workers during the 2008 Presidential Election and revising training curriculum where necessary.
6. Reviewing voting sites and consolidating when opportune.
7. Assessing and revising the department's system for candidates and elected officials to file campaign finance reports on-line.

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September 29, 2008