

2026



Legislative Reference Bureau

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ELECTION COMMISSION



2026 Proposed Plan and Executive Budget Review

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Budget Hearing: 9:00 am on Friday, October 17, 2025

Election Commission

\$5,247,509

Proposed 2026 Budget

+\$2,008,117

Overall Change from 2025

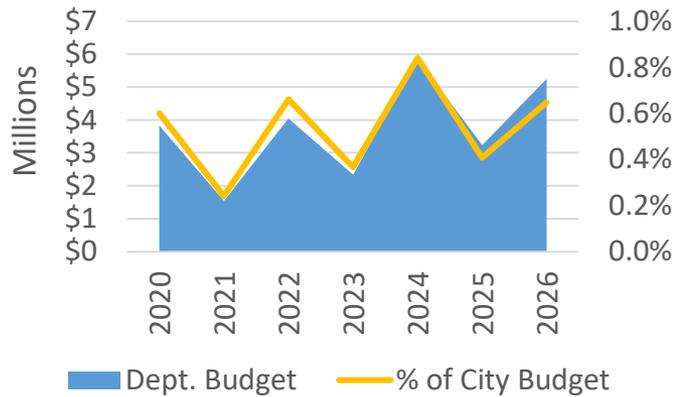
-\$1,091,735

Difference from Requested

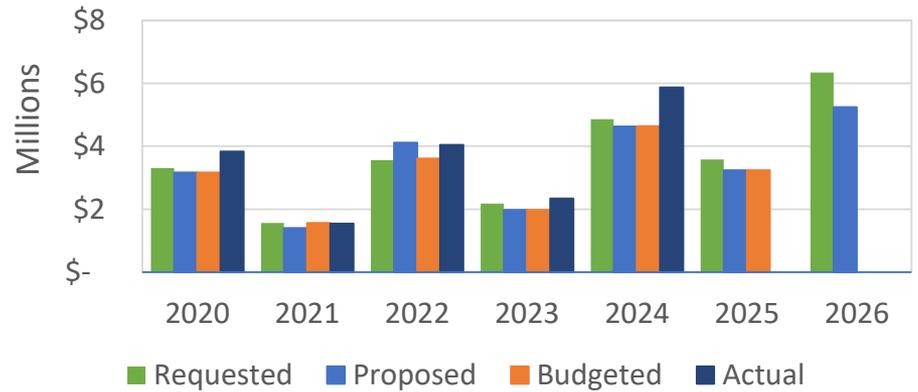
\$6,339,244

Requested 2026 Budget

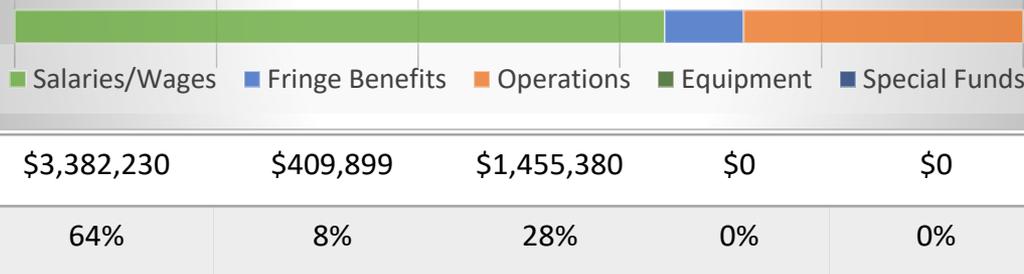
Total Departmental Budget



Comparative Funding



Levy Departmental Budget Appropriation by Category



Personnel Budget



+62.2%

Change in Salaries and Wages
from 2025 Budget.

+\$1,297,111

Change in Salaries and Wages
from 2025 Budget.

Retirement Eligible



0 Change in Positions	0% % Change in Positions
0 Current Vacancies	0 Voluntary Separations In 2025

Staffing Update

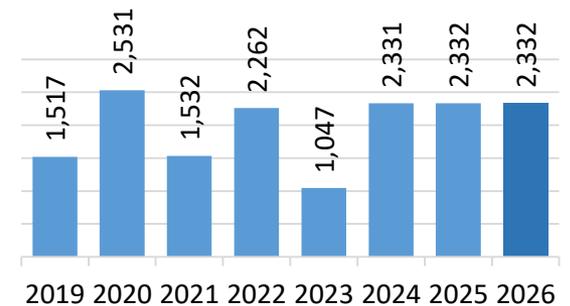
Change in net salaries and wages from 2025 Adopted to 2026 Proposed Budgets:

- **Net salaries and wages:** +62.2% (+\$1,297,111), with the following highlights:
 - Executive Director: +9.5% (+\$11,825)
 - Deputy Director: -8.3% (-\$10,000)
 - Election Services Field Coordinator: +7% (+\$5,148)
 - Election Services Coordinator: +1.4% (+\$1,809)
 - Temporary Election Laborer: +166.7% (+\$212,043)
 - 6 Positions
 - Election Inspector: +100% (\$+778,120)
 - 2,300 Positions
 - Temporary Office Assistant II: +95.2% (+\$287,796)
 - 11 Positions

Staffing Vacancies

The Milwaukee Election Commission (MEC) is currently fully staffed and does not have any vacancies.

Department Positions



+95%

Change in Operating Expenditures from 2025 Adopted Budget (\$746,043) to 2026 Proposed (\$1,455,380) Budget.

+\$820,000

Change in Capital Program and Projects from 2025 Adopted Budget (\$80,000) to 2026 Proposed Budget.

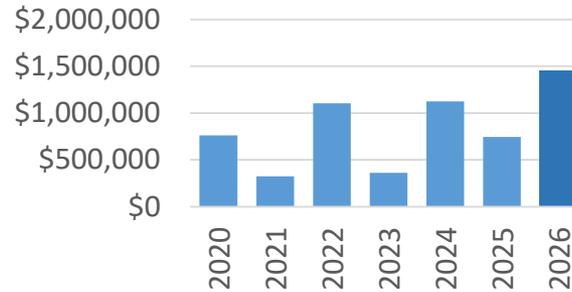
210

Number of ballot scanning machines (tabulators) that the Election Commission plans to replace from 2025 to 2032.

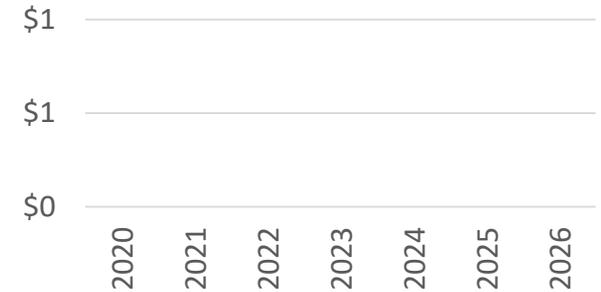
35%

Share of 2026 Proposed Budget that the Election Commission plans to use for election worker recruitment & training (\$1,836,628).

Operating Expenditures Budget



Equipment Budget



Revenue

The 2026 Proposed Budget includes no revenues for this department.

Special Purpose Accounts

The 2026 Proposed Budget includes no special purpose accounts for this department.

Grants

The 2026 Proposed Budget includes no grants for this department.

Capital Programs and Projects

Upgrades*	\$730,000
Express Voting Machines	170,0\$00
Total	\$900,000

*These funds are earmarked to support the modernization and consolidation of election operations, develop a plan for a permanent in person absentee voting site in the Midtown neighborhood, and enhance overall security and efficiency.

85%

Turnout of registered voters in the 2024 General Election (248,202), compared with 76% in the 2020 General Election (247,785).

1:1

Ballot ordering ratio that MEC plans to implement in 2026 for the Spring and Partisan Primary Elections

1

Number of community listening sessions planned for 2026.

20

Number of engagement opportunities to instill trust in the democratic process in 2025 attended and led by MEC staff.

Partnerships

MEC depends heavily on partnerships to administer elections. This includes partnerships with internal and external stakeholders such as the Milwaukee Public Library System (MPL), Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), Milwaukee Police Department (MPD), Milwaukee Recreation, Milwaukee County and nonprofits, churches and other organizations.

For special projects and community events, MEC has partnered with a variety of organizations focused on voting, including Souls to the Polls, All Voting is Local, Milwaukee Turners, Community Brainstorming Conference, City of Milwaukee Office of African American Affairs and others.

Partnerships include space for polling locations, space for MEC sponsored events, voter registration drives, election security, and poll worker recruitment efforts, etc. The MEC continues to pursue these critical partnerships to support access to voting.

Pop-Up Early Voting Center

In 2024, during Juneteenth National Independence Day, MEC piloted a pop-up early voting center for a small special election in an area with historically low turnout. This pilot enabled one-on-one voter engagement.

MEC had no pop-up early voting centers in 2025. MEC plans to continue exploring this method of early voting election administration at future community events, with the goals of increasing turnout and deepening trust in the election process.

2025 Spring Election Figures	#
Election Day Voter Registrations	5,813
Registered voters	309,755
Polling locations	180
Absentee Voting/Early Voting (IPAV) Locations	10
2024 General Election Figure	#
Registered voters	292,776
Ballots cast	248,202

4

Number of elections planned for 2026 in Milwaukee, including Congress, Governor, State Legislature, and State Supreme Court races.

0

Number of active building leases. MEC is currently in the process of acquiring a lease for the 2026 Midtown early voting site.

-8

Change in the number of trust-building voter engagement opportunities planned for 2026, down from 20 in 2025.

5-10

Number of yearly outreach and community events that the Election Commission encourages full-time staff to attend.

Milwaukee Election Commission 2026 Plans

Part of the MEC's mission is to instill confidence in the democratic process. As part of this mission, MEC has become more intentional about our voter engagement work. MEC is planning to attend 12 community events and to host at least one community listening session in 2026. The decline in community events compared to 2025 is due to pivoting efforts on administering the four elections in 2026.

Partnering with other organizations helps amplify voter engagement and fosters trust. In addition to MEC's direct outreach efforts, the department works to empower community-based organization with facts and accurate information so that the organizations can engage with voters in their networks. In order to support those groups, MEC has rebranded its materials and developed a quality assurance system to reduce publishing errors. MEC is working with ITMD on a community resource website that will organize all important election materials that will be accessible to anyone.

In addition, MEC has regularly-scheduled meetings with key partners to streamline communication and to improve its planning efforts. For example, MEC has scheduled meetings with Souls to the Polls two months before every election, and meets regularly with voting organizations in Milwaukee to provide important updates. MEC also offers voter registration training for community groups so that they understand the process and can reduce voter registration errors and confusion. MEC also works closely with its city partners, including the Milwaukee Public Library System to share resources to help get the word out about elections.

MEC is implementing new internal communication protocols and system enhancements for Election Day. It is planning more formal trainings for all of its seasonal staff and will be expanding the number of courier and technician staff on election day. Additionally, MEC has developed a media toolkit to share with their media partners so that they can help MEC get accurate information out to the public.

Election Commission

2025-2026 Wisconsin Elections*

Year	#	Dates	Congress	Gov.	Other State Exec.	State Leg.	State Supreme Court	Intermediate Appellate Courts
2025	2	February 18 April 1			✓		✓	✓
2026	4	February 17 April 7 August 11 November 3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*Based on Ballotpedia and Election Commission information.

Service Provided	2025 Proposed*	%
Voter registration management	\$787,126	15%
Absentee voting administration	\$1,049,502	20%
Election worker recruitment & training	\$1,836,628	35%
Polling place coordination	\$1,311,877	25%
Candidate filing & campaign finance reporting	\$262,375	5%
Total	\$5,247,509	100%

*Includes all personnel & operating expenditures