



REPORT

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

WWW.MILWAUKEE.GOV/LRB

11. Election Commission, 2014

Proposed Plan and Executive Budget Review

11. Election Commission

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

Table 11.1. Statement of Changes in Operating Budget, 2013 to 2014.*

2012 Actual Expenditures	\$4,052,288
2013 Adopted Budget	\$1,371,679
Personnel Costs	
Salaries & Wages	\$993,317
Fringe Benefits	(\$4,401)
Total Changes	\$988,916
Operating Expenses	\$315,600
Total Changes	\$1,304,516
2014 Proposed Budget	\$2,676,195

*Each year of the 4-year election cycle has unique staffing demands based on the numbers of elections, offices to be elected and varying voter turnouts.

1. Total expenditures increased 95.1%.

The 2014 Proposed Budget for the Election Commission is \$2,676,195, an increase of \$1,304,516 (95.1%) from the 2013 budgeted amount of \$1,371,679.

2. Operating expenditures more than doubled.

Operating Expenditures in the 2014 Proposed Budget are \$631,000, an increase of \$315,600 (>100.0%) from the 2013 Adopted Budget amount of \$315,400. The change can be attributed primarily to an increase in Other Operating Services of \$280,560 (263.6%) to \$387,000 in 2014 to support costs, including postage, ballots, poll books, programming and public notices.

3. Authorized positions reflect change in classifying poll workers.

Poll workers, previously paid as contractors under accounts for "Other Operating Services," have been identified as authorized positions

since 2012. In 2014, a gubernatorial election year, the number of authorized Election Inspectors is increased to 2,361, an increase of 1574 (200%) from the 787 positions authorized in 2013. Fringe benefits do not apply to these part-time employees, and authorized positions for Election Inspectors and Temporary Office Assistants are not included in the 8,311 total City positions authorized.

4. Precincts and polling locations. The Election Commission has established 193 polling sites supporting a total of 327 wards. Internet systems have been updated as needed to allow voters to identify reconfigured wards and polling sites.

5. Four scheduled elections in 2014. The scheduled elections for 2014 are the Spring Primary and General Elections on February 18, and April 1, and the Fall Primary and General Elections on August 12, and November 4.

6. Reliance upon outside data entry support reduced in 2014. Reliance by the Election Commission for outside data entry services will continue to be reduced as voter registration and other information is entered by Commission staff.

7. Polling machines at end of useful life.

The "OpTech Eagles polling machines have reached the projected end of useful operation. Discussions with Milwaukee County on a county-wide purchase of new, standardized equipment in late 2014 or 2015 have the potential for significant capital and equipment cost savings to the City.

II. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS.

1. 2013 Elections.

Two lighter turnout elections were held in the Spring of 2013: a Primary Election on February 19 with 25,983 (7.3% turnout) and the General Election on April 2 with 51,783 ballots cast (14.6% turnout). This lighter year of the regular 4-year election cycle provided an opportunity for the Election Commission to regroup and focus on longer-range planning following the challenging election cycle in 2012 in which 6 elections were held, including the Presidential Primary during the Spring Elections, the Fall Presidential Election, and 2 Recall Elections. A transition in leadership to a new Executive Director prior to the August, 2012, statewide Primary Election also presented unusual organizational challenges.

The Spring, 2013, elections included contests for State Superintendent of Schools, a State Supreme Court Justice, multiple local judicial offices and school board directors. The General Election ballot also included a referendum question placed upon adoption of Common Council Resolution File Number 121270: "Should the state of Wisconsin continue to permit citizens to register to vote at the polls on Election Day?" The referendum passed 34,872 (72.9%) to 12,972 (27.1%).

Table 11.2. City of Milwaukee Election Turnout, Fall 2010 and Spring 2013.

September 14, 2010	Fall Primary Election	November 2, 2010	Fall General Election
Precincts Counted	312 (100%)	Precincts Counted	312 (100%)
Registered Voters	305,536	Registered Voters	301,586
Total Ballots Cast	69,715	Total Ballots Cast	187,811
Total Voter Turnout	22.8%	Total Voter Turnout	62.3%
February 19, 2013	Spring Primary Election	April 2, 2013	Spring General Election
Precincts Counted	327 (100%)	Precincts Counted	327 (100%)
Registered Voters	357,485	Registered Voters	355,311
Total Ballots Cast	25,983	Total Ballots Cast	51,906
Total Voter Turnout	7.27%	Total Voter Turnout	14.6%

2. Planning for 2014 Elections.

The gubernatorial election in 2014 is expected to draw significant voter interest. Figures from the 2010 election cycle suggests that turnout in the 2014 elections may be more than 3 times as high as the 2013 elections. Voter participation generated as a result of the 2012 election cycle may produce even higher turnouts than is typical for a gubernatorial election; the Election Commission is therefore planning on a voter turnout comparable to the 2008 Presidential Election exceeding 250,000 ballots cast.

The election dates and deadlines listed in Table 11.3 provide a snapshot of the planning and work that has begun to ensure fair, accurate and transparent elections, which is the primary objective of the Election Commission.

Table 11.3. 2014 Election Dates and Deadlines.

Tuesday, February 18, 2014 (Spring Primary)	
January 29th:	Last day for electors to register to vote by mail.
February 3rd:	First day for In-Person Absentee Voting.
February 13th:	Last day to request absentee ballots by mail.
February 14th:	Last day for In-Person Absentee Voting.
Tuesday, April 1, 2014 (Spring Election)	
March 12th:	Last day for electors to register to vote by mail.
March 17th:	First day for In-Person Absentee Voting.
March 27th:	Last day to request absentee ballots by mail.
March 28th:	Last day for In-Person Absentee Voting.
Tuesday, August 12, 2014 (Partisan Primary)	
July 23rd:	Last day for electors to register to vote by mail.
July 28th:	First day for In-Person Absentee Voting.
August 7th:	Last day to request absentee ballots by mail.
August 8th:	Last day for In-Person Absentee Voting.
Tuesday, November 4, 2014 (Fall General)	
October 15th:	Last day for electors to register to vote by mail.
October 20th:	First day for In-Person Absentee Voting.
October 30th:	Last day to request absentee ballots by mail.
October 31st:	Last day for In-Person Absentee Voting.

3. Poll worker recruitment and training.

Work has begun to ensure that Election Inspectors and Chief Election Inspectors are recruited and trained for 2014 elections in compliance with Wisconsin Government Accountability Board (GAB) guidelines to assure competence and efficiency in the conduct of elections. Policies and procedures, implemented in 2012 to avoid late returns from polling sites, will be continued through 2014.

Additional assistance at the polls in 2012 was recruited from the ranks of City workers. The Election Commission projects increasing the number of Election Inspectors from 829 in the 2013 Budget to 2,361 in the Proposed 2014 Budget. This number is nearly 10% higher than the number originally budgeted for the 2012 Presidential Election year.

4. Voter registration, education and access.

Absent new court decisions or legislation related to Voter Identification, the registration activities appear to be operating smoothly and without significant challenges. The Election Commission plans to evaluate the Special Registration Deputy program and the voter registration efforts for students turning 18 in the Milwaukee Public Schools.

5. Moving voter registration and related data entry functions in-house.

Entry of voter registration data into the state's system continues to transition from a contract service provider to in-house capacity which is expected to significantly reduce future operational costs.

6. Bilingual

The City is one of more than 10,000 jurisdictions covered by Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act as amended in 1975. The Section provides:

"Whenever any State or political subdivision [covered by the section] provides registration or voting notices, forms, instructions, assistance, or other materials or information relating to the electoral process, including ballots, it shall provide them in the language of the applicable minority group as well as in the English language."

As a result, the Election Commission has developed a bilingual program to enable Spanish-speaking voters with limited English proficiency to participate effectively in the electoral process. The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board (GAB) has also participated in identifying targeted polling sites for increased bilingual assistance. The Election Commission applies a bilingual staffing formula that is established by the U.S. Department of Justice.

To facilitate compliance with federal and state standards, the Election Commission has established an advisory task force composed of members of the Spanish-speaking community. The task force participates in evaluating services to the Spanish-speaking community and making recommendations for improvement.

A bilingual elections coordinator will continue to oversee all activities related to the bilingual elections program working with the deputy director of the Elections Commission and other staff members.

III. EXPENDITURES.**Table 11.4. Changes in Expenditure Amounts by Account.**

Expenditure Account	2012 Actual Expenditures	2013 Adopted Budget	% Change	2014 Proposed Budget	% Change
Salaries and Wages	\$2,256,464	\$870,867	-61.4%	\$1,864,184	114.1%
Fringe Benefits	\$549,418	\$185,412	-66.3%	\$181,011	-0.5%
Operating Expenditures	\$1,246,406	\$315,400	-74.7%	\$631,000	100.0%
Total Operating Budget	\$4,052,288	\$1,371,679	-66.2%	\$2,676,195	95.1%

1. Budget Summary.

The total 2014 Proposed Budget is \$2,676,195, an increase of \$1,304,516 (95.1%) from the 2013 Adopted Budget amount of \$1,371,679. The Proposed Budget is limited to Salaries and Wages, Fringe Benefits and Operation Expenditures with no amounts included in the 2013 Budget or the 2014 Proposed Budget for Equipment Expenditures or Special funds.

2. Personnel Costs.

Personnel costs in the 2014 Proposed Budget are \$2,045,195, an increase of \$988,916 (106.9%) from the 2013 Adopted Budget amount of \$1,056,279. Salaries and wages increase \$993,317 (114.1%). Fringe benefits decrease, however, by \$4,401 (12.4%). The increase is largely due to the increase in both poll workers and the number of election days worked (from 2 to 4). The poll workers (Election Inspectors and Chief Inspectors) are not provided fringe benefits.

3. Operating Expenditures.

Operating Expenditures in the 2013 Proposed Budget are \$631,000, an increase of \$315,600, slightly more than 100%) from the 2013 Adopted Budget amount of \$315,400. The changes can be attributed primarily to increases in Other Operating Services from \$106,440 to \$387,000.

The Election Commission estimates that Other Operating Services funds will reimburse the following estimated costs:

- \$65,000—Postage for absentee ballot mailing and return.
- \$95,000—Non-ballot supplies including poll book printing and signage.
- \$40,000—Polling place equipment including booths, easels and replacement parts for voting machines.
- \$75,000—Ballots.
- \$30,000—Public Notice Advertising.
- \$18,000—Programming software and license agreement costs.

The 2014 Proposed Budget for Professional Services is \$100,000 (\$25,000 less than requested). The Election Commission estimates that up to \$50,000 may be expended for data management support (considerably less than in previous years), \$25,000 will be expended for a bilingual election consultant to ensure compliance with Section 203 of the U.S. Voting Rights Act and to recruit and train bilingual poll workers, and up to \$25,000 to support training of more than 2,000 poll workers including curriculum development and facilitation.

The current budgeted amounts for Operating Expenditures do not presently include the costs of adding a referendum question to the November ballot. An advisory referendum similar to those recently placed on other municipal ballots across Wisconsin related to a U.S. Constitutional Amendment to limit corporate election influence has been under discussion. The costs of the referendum, if not absorbed within the Proposed Budget have been calculated to include \$10,000 in ballot costs (Milwaukee County has estimated additional printing costs of \$0.02 per ballot) and between \$3,000 and \$4,000 in public notice costs.

4. Equipment Purchases.

None.

5. Special Funds.

None.

IV. PERSONNEL.

Table 11.5. Changes in Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) and Authorized Positions.

Position Category	2012 Actual	2013 Adopted Budget	Change	2014 Proposed Budget	Change
O&M FTEs	27.08	8.81	(18.27)	38.64	29.83
Non-O&M FTEs	0	0	0	0	0
Total Authorized Positions	2,156	829	1,327	2,389	1,560

1. Personnel Changes.

The total number of authorized positions in the department under the 2014 Proposed Budget is increased by 1,560 from the 2013 Adopted Budget. This increase includes 1,574 more Election Inspectors than the 787 authorized in the 2013 Budget, and it includes 17 fewer Temporary Office Assistant II positions than the 30 authorized in the 2013 Budget. The number of Temporary Election Laborers (0.73 total FTE) is increased from 2 to 5.

There are 7 full-time staff positions, which remain unchanged from 2013, and 3 Election Commissioners, who are paid nominally for meetings.

2. Vacancies.

There is currently one vacancy among full-time authorized staff for the position of Program Assistant I. It is anticipated that this position will be filled within the next 60 days.

V. SPECIAL PURPOSE ACCOUNTS (SPA).

None.

VI. REVENUES.

The 2014 Proposed Election Commission Budget provides no estimate for revenues. Small amounts are received from time to time for photo-copying and the production of printed lists. The Comptroller has recognized \$5,000 in "Miscellaneous" charges for services, and reports \$8,203 received in 2012.

VII. CAPITAL PROJECTS.

None.

VIII. ISSUES TO CONSIDER.

1. Factors outside the control of the Election Commission, including judicial decisions related to Voter Identification litigation and legislation currently pending before the Wisconsin Legislature could require significant new and un-budgeted expenditures. It will be important for the Election Commission and the Intergovernmental Relations Division to continue timely and comprehensive briefings before the Judiciary and Legislation Committee. One example of pending legislation that could result in significant new costs is the legislation introduced as *SB-297/AB-396* : "*Absentee voting at residential care facilities...*" This legislation has been reviewed by the Judiciary and Legislation Committee in Common Council Resolution File 130761.

2. The "OpTech Eagles" voting machines currently in use have proven highly reliable but have reached the projected end of their useful life and are no longer being manufactured. It will be necessary to secure a new generation of voting machines before the 2016 national elections. To ensure that reliable machines are obtained and operational, planning should begin to secure capital funding in 2014 to obtain machines for the 2015 election cycle in preparation for the 2016 cycle.

3. Training and maintaining a full complement of Election Inspectors, and especially Chief Inspectors, is challenging. Expanded recruitment of City employees may be one option to pursue.

Prepared by: Richard L. Withers, Legislative Research Analyst—Lead
Budget Hearing Date: October 10, 2013
Last Updated: October 7, 2013