



Cuyahoga County Board of Elections  
**2018-2019 Biennial Budget Testimony**

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**PRESENTED BY DIRECTOR PAT MCDONALD  
AT THE CUYAHOGA COUNTY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING  
ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2017**

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**Introduction**

Good Afternoon Chairman Miller, President Brady, and Members of Council.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide budget testimony on behalf of the Board of Elections. With almost 900,000 registered voters in 975 precincts, we are the largest elections jurisdiction in the State of Ohio.

I am pleased to inform you that this biennial budget includes sufficient funding for the Board to successfully conduct all anticipated elections in 2018 and 2019.

**Overview**

As you may know, our budget fluctuates significantly depending on the election year. In 2018, we will conduct a statewide primary election in May and a statewide general election in November. These elections will include candidates for federal, state, and county offices.

The combined number of precincts, registered voters, and poll locations for these two elections will represent a 25 percent increase compared to this year's municipal elections. This will necessitate an increase in our budget to pay for more poll workers, ballots, postage, printed materials, and other

supplies, as well as for more temporary staff to assist with our processes. Therefore, our budget of \$15 million for 2018 represents a 16 percent increase compared to this year's projected expenditures of \$12.9 million.

However, our budget will be reduced to \$12.8 million in 2019. That year, we will conduct municipal primary elections in May and September, and a countywide general election in November.

### **Budget Reductions / Eliminations of Programs, Initiatives, or Services**

No existing programs, initiatives, or services were eliminated from our 2018 and 2019 budget. The reduction to \$12.8 million in 2019 is a result of fewer precincts, poll locations, and registered voters involved in the elections anticipated for that year.

### **New Initiatives / Increased Expenditures**

#### *Voter Registration System*

Our biennial budget includes one significant new expenditure related to our voter registration system. Beginning in 2018, we will resume the annual \$50,000 software license payment for our current system. This payment had been waived since 2010 due to a settlement agreement with our previous voting equipment vendor.

#### *Electronic Pollbooks*

This will also be the first biennial budget to incorporate our transition from paper pollbooks to electronic pollbooks, which will result in a net savings of approximately \$66,000. As you know, we purchased the e-pollbooks earlier this year and implemented them successfully in the May and September Primary Elections. The upcoming General Election will be the first time we deploy these units for a countywide election.

### **Personnel Changes from 2017**

#### *Full-Time Employees*

The Board currently has 91 full-time employee positions, and the 2018 and 2019 budget does not include any additions or reductions in full-time personnel. As in past years, the budget also includes a two-percent raise for full-time employees.

### *Temporary Employees*

As mentioned previously, our temporary staffing levels will fluctuate significantly each year. We have included funding for 500 temporary positions for the 2018 elections, and for 300 temporary positions for the 2019 elections. Additionally, the wage for temporary employees will increase from \$11.00 per hour to \$11.25 per hour in 2018 and to \$11.50 per hour in 2019. This increase of just over two percent each year will help make our pay rates more competitive when compared to those of other major boards of elections in Ohio, as well as make our temporary positions more attractive to prospective recruits.

### **Issues / Additional Funding Requests**

At this time, we have no requests for additional funding for our biennial budget.

### *Special Elections*

However, one detail I want to highlight is that we did not request any funding for special elections. Since the February special election was eliminated three years ago, the frequency and size of special elections have noticeably decreased. This year, for example, we did not have to conduct any special elections even though we included approximately \$100,000 in our budget for such purposes. Additionally, political subdivisions must reimburse the County for the entire cost of a special election.

Therefore—since special elections are infrequent, small, and revenue neutral—the Board will instead only request appropriation for special elections on an as-needed basis if any such election occurs.

### *Voting Equipment*

I'd also like to provide you an update on the status of replacing our voting equipment, which could potentially impact this biennium's budget. While the industry-standard useful life for voting equipment is 10 years, the equipment utilized by many counties in Ohio was purchased between 2004 and 2006. Therefore, most of the voting equipment used in this State is now past its expected useful life.

Fortunately, the equipment currently utilized by the Board of Elections was purchased in 2008 or later and is still in acceptable condition. However, our 500 ADA voting units will reach their 10-year life expectancy in 2018, and our 1,200 Election Day ballot scanners will do the same in 2019.

To address the impending challenge of replacing the aging voting equipment in the State of Ohio, the Ohio Association of Elections Officials and the County Commissioners Association of Ohio have been

working with the State Legislature on a potential funding package. Ideally, this funding package would include a state-local match similar to the funding arrangement set up for this year's purchase of e-pollbooks.

While no funding for new voting equipment has yet been approved, Senate Bill 135 recently introduced by Sen. Frank LaRose would allocate \$89 million for this purpose. The bill would aim to provide 80 percent of the funding for new equipment to each board of elections, with the counties supplying the remaining 20 percent. Under this arrangement, we would expect to receive approximately \$9.4 million from the State, which would require a \$2.4 million match from the County for a total purchase amount of \$11.8 million.

While I understand that even \$2.4 million may pose a challenge to the County's coffers, earlier this year I discussed various funding options with Council President Brady and County Executive Budish that could possibly ease the budgetary impact.

Just as with e-pollbooks, any purchase of voting equipment will require the approval of County Council, so I will be in close communication with you on this topic as we move forward. With that said, I would like to invite you to a vendor conference scheduled for December 6<sup>th</sup> at the Board of Elections, which will include demonstrations from all currently certified vendors in the State of Ohio. Representatives from eight other boards of elections in the region will also be in attendance to review the different equipment options.

### Conclusion

At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee. I also have with me Sean Webster, our Business Administration Manager, who can provide additional budgetary information.

Thank you,



Pat McDonald, Director