Department
0525 BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

Mission

Administer transparent, impartial, accurate election systems; manage voter registrations; safeguard rights of voters to cast ballots independently in safe, quiet atmospheres, free of interference or intimidation; and inform voters of options to cast ballots through Vote By Mail, Early Voting, Election Day Voting and Election Day Registration.

Mandates

The Election Board is responsible for administering all elections in the City of Chicago in keeping with the Illinois Election Code, federal statutes and case law. Responsibilities include: maintaining registration records; processing candidate nominating petitions and hearing objections on same; preparing the balloting equipment and supplies; communicating with voters on registration and voting options; identifying and securing accessible polling places and equipment; recruiting and training judges of election and other investigative and tech-support staff; and performing quality-assurance reviews and investigations. Under newer laws, the Board also provides systems to register voters and file name/address changes in every Election Day polling place.

Key Activities and Services

List key activities and services provided by department in bulleted form.

- Board & Administration – Provides overall management of agency to ensure compliance with all laws and court orders, coordination of all departments, purchasing and accounts-payable operations, and communication with stakeholders that include voters, campaigns, political parties, poll workers, civic groups and local, state and federal government agencies.
- Voter Registration – Manages all phases of voter registration including new and changed registrations, Grace Period Registration, mail canvasses to check accuracy and currency of records, canceling of outdated records of voters who move or die, cross-referencing with other jurisdictions' databases to eliminate duplicate records, maintenance of records of all voters' participation in elections, and mapping of all districts and precincts.
- Pre-Election Voting & Logistics – Manages all non-Election Day voting systems, including: Early Voting; Vote By Mail; Military/Overseas Voting; Nursing Home Voting; election investigators; hearings on petition objections; logistics for deliveries of election supplies to and from polling places; evaluation/selection of Early Voting and Election Day polling places; and, the new federally-mandated program to assure polling-place accessibility.
- Community Services – Manages the programming requirements for the electronic poll books. Manages the recruitment, applications, assignment and training of 15,000 judges of election and year-round community outreach programs that cover voter-registrar training and programs that involve translations and related language assistance in Spanish, Chinese, Hindi and Polish.
- Information Technology – Oversees all servers and computer records, including the Election Management System/Voter Registration Database, and managing the testing, programming and performance of voting and phone equipment, including capturing election results.
- Warehouse – Maintains, prepares and tests all equipment for delivery to 2,069 precincts and 51 early voting sites, including Election Supply Carriers, ballot scanners, touch screens, paper ballots, voting booths, electronic poll books and all varieties of supplies, ranging from pens and power cords to security seals, forms, signs and U.S. flags.

Discussion of 2018 Department and Program Outcomes

In 2017, the Board has performed or is performing the following:

- Entered a Settlement Agreement with the U.S. Justice Department that will require the Board to work toward achieving the goal of having 100% of all polling places be fully accessible under the latest standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by the November 2018 General Election;
- Conducted a Special Election for Alderman of the Fourth Ward;
- Evaluating options for new voting equipment in coordination with the Cook County Clerk's Office;
- Programming upgrades for the Electronic Poll Books used to check in voters;
- Lobbied for and creating programs to work with the new "Automatic Voter Registration" system that has been approved unanimously by the General Assembly, and is now being considered by the Governor;
- Work with the Illinois State Board of Elections and the Illinois Department of Public Health for expanded, timely access to death records; and,
- Performed a complete canvass mailing to all 1.6 million voters in Chicago to update the voter rolls.

In 2018, the Board will:
- Perform hearings on objections to the nomination papers of candidates who file for the offices of U.S. Representative, State Senator and State Representative in districts that are within Cook County and that are located either partly or entirely in Chicago;
- Work toward achieving the 100% accessibility goal under the Settlement Agreement with the U.S. Justice Department by the Nov. 6, 2018 General Election;
- Perform a complete canvass of the voter rolls;
- Conduct elections in all precincts in all 50 wards for the March Primary and November General Elections;
- Upgrade the electronic poll book system;
- Introduce new voting equipment; and,
- Prepare for the 2019 Municipal Elections: petition filing will begin November 2018 and objection hearings will begin December 2018.

Budget, Cost Analysis and 2018 Strategic Initiatives and Goals
- Online Registrations – Since the launch of online registration in Illinois in 2014, Chicago has accounted for the largest shares of online registrants. In 2016, Chicago processed more than 120,000 online registrations. The Board anticipates growing that to 130,000 in 2018.
- Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) – If enacted in 2018, there will be more voters on the rolls and more postage costs for verification mailings and pre-election/canvass mailings.
- Election Day Registration (EDR) – Chicago led the state with more than 60,000 EDRs in 2016. If Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) goes into effect in 2018, EDRs should drop significantly. Without AVR, the Board expects EDRs will drop, but only slightly, in 2018.
- Early Voting – Voting during the month before Election Day continues to grow. For the Presidential Election, the Board saw a record 325,000 early voting ballots. Because mid-term turnouts are typically not as high as presidential years, that number may decrease.
- Vote By Mail – Vote By Mail is now easier than ever. No excuse is needed. An online application is available. Voters can monitor the processing of their ballot by email. The Board seeks to expand Vote By Mail to reduce traffic during Early Voting and on Election Day. For the November 2016 Election, a modern record of nearly 100,000 voters used Vote By Mail. The Board will try to grow that number for November 2018.
- Upgrade Poll Book and Voting Technology — Electronic Poll Books gave Judges of Election a tool to assist all voters, even those in the wrong polling place. The Board upgraded the system to allow for Election Day Registrations. The next goal involves updating 12-year-old balloting equipment. New scanners offer more security, flexibility and ballot-printing options. Changes in equipment will affect all 1.6 million voters in Chicago.