



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 19-1360, **Version:** 1

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### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

#### **CELEBRATING THE 188TH ANNIVERSARY OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS AND APPOINTING A LOCAL HISTORIAN FOR COOK COUNTY**

**WHEREAS**, Cook County was founded by an act of the Illinois legislature on January 15, 1831, and

**WHEREAS**, originally part of the commonwealth of Virginia, the area which comprises modern day Cook County was also part of the Northwest Territory and then a part of 10 separate counties as the territory was formed into states, including Illinois. The ten counties are Knox (1790), St. Clair (1801), Madison (1812), Edwards (1814), Crawford (1816), Clark (1819), Pike (1819), Fulton (1823), Peoria (1825), Putnam (1826), and

**WHEREAS**, when formed in 1831, Cook County's original boundaries included all of McHenry, Lake, DuPage and parts of Kane and Will. The other counties were separately created between 1836 and 1839, leading to Cook County's current boundaries, and

**WHEREAS**, Cook County was named for Daniel Pope Cook (1794 - October 16, 1827). Originally from Kentucky, Cook moved to Illinois and became a lawyer, newspaper publisher, politician and one of the early advocates of statehood for Illinois. An anti-slavery advocate, he was the state's first Attorney General, and then congressman. Cook County, Illinois is named after him. It is believed Cook never visited the area which would be named in his honor, and

**WHEREAS**, the first Cook County Board of Commissioners was elected on March 7, 1831, taking office and holding their first meeting the following day. Three commissioners-Gholson Kercheval, Samuel Miller and James Walker convened a meeting at Fort Dearborn on the Chicago Settlement lakeshore, in the magazine (powder room). The first County Board meeting would last for two days, and

**WHEREAS**, also elected on March 7 were James Kinsey, Sheriff and John K. Clark, Coroner; William See, County Clerk, Archibald Clybourn, County Treasurer were appointed March 8 and Jededah Wooley was recommended as County Surveyor to the Governor and Legislature, and

**WHEREAS**, one of the first acts of the new board was approval of a resolution asking Illinois for 10 acres of land including the corner of Clark and Randolph for the location of a new County Courthouse. This building would be completed in 1835 and included a small stockade which served as the first County Jail and later added an Almshouse which was the forerunner of the County Hospital, and

**WHEREAS**, the official population of Cook County at the time of its founding was 100 (a count of settlers, not including Native Americans forcibly removed from the local area). The Chicago settlement (Chicago was not incorporated as a town until 1833) had 50 to 60 residents, and

**WHEREAS**, Cook County would become a leader in growing the region, the state and the nation; blazing trails in the fields of transportation, food processing, public health, education, juvenile justice, art and music. The dynamic and diverse county population would swell the county population to 350,000 in 1870, over 1.1 million 20 years later and 1.8 million at the turn of the 20th Century. By 1910, Cook County had 2.4 million residents, surpassing three million residents by 1920. By 1940, Cook County grew to four million residents. In 1960, Cook County population totaled 5.1 million, and

**WHEREAS**, the history of Cook County Government contributed directly to the development of the region and the State of Illinois, with many projects and initiatives of several County departments directly impacting the economic and political direction of the region for years to come, and

**WHEREAS**, as Cook County approaches its 200th anniversary-and having developed a unique and extensive collection of public documents and records that contain historical significance-establishing an initiative to archive historically significant documents and records is imperative to County Government history; and

**WHEREAS**, fundamental to capturing the history of Cook County is a thorough and complete documentation of the history of Cook County Government; and

**WHEREAS**, Cook County Government must effectively and efficiently coordinate efforts across all departments and with all officials to determine the historical value of various county documents and records and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners regarding access and promotion of the County's history; and

**WHEREAS**, Cook County Government must collaborate with individuals and organizations that possess experience and expertise in the implementation of large-scale archive efforts; as well as seek guidance and recommendations from current and past County officials with vast historical knowledge of Cook County Government; and

**WHEREAS**, 50 ILCS 130, the Illinois Local Historian Act allows for local governments to appoint, without pay, a local historian for the purpose of preparing and publishing local histories, preserving and protecting local historic records, artifacts and edifices and documenting local current events; and

**WHEREAS**, the President and the Board of Commissioner of Cook County believe it is important to the County's preservation effort and to the successful commemoration of the County's 200th anniversary that the Board does appoint an individual to serve in the role of County Historian; and

**WHEREAS**, Secretary to the Board Matthew B. DeLeon currently serves in the role of Chair of the Cook County Archives Advisory Committee, a committee formed to address archives related issues; and

**WHEREAS**, Secretary DeLeon has served the last five Presidents of the County Board and is in his 29th year of local government service, 26 of those with Cook County Government and in his 13th year as Secretary to the Board; and

**WHEREAS**, Secretary DeLeon will be a unique position to draw on his experience and the experience of others with whom he has worked to properly document the history of Cook County;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the President and the members of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County does hereby celebrate the 188th anniversary of the founding of Cook County, Illinois; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the President and the members of the Board of Commissioners does hereby appoint Matthew B. DeLeon, Secretary to the Board as the Historian of Cook County to lead the effort to preserve the County's legacy and promote the historic role County Government has played in the history of Illinois and the United States; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the President and the members of the Board of Commissioners of Cook County encourages all County agencies under all elected and appointed officials to work closely with the County Historian to document the history of their offices, preserving documents, photographs, films, other media and artifacts towards that purpose..