

Redbook

LBO Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal

Ohio Elections Commission

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LBO Redbook

Ohio Elections Commission

Quick look...

- The Ohio Elections Commission oversees political party spending, campaign finance, and corporate political contributions to ensure compliance with the Ohio Elections Law.
- The Commission consists of seven members, three of which are democrats, three of which are republicans, and one independent. It is staffed by a full-time executive director, one executive assistant, and one part-time administrative assistant.
- The executive budget recommends continuation funding of \$634,681 in each fiscal year of the FY 2020-FY 2021 biennium.

Fund Group	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Estimate	FY 2020 Introduced	FY 2021 Introduced
General Revenue	\$418,774	\$435,221	\$435,221	\$435,221
Dedicated Purpose	\$152,133	\$198,495	\$199,460	\$199,460
Total	\$570,907	\$633,716	\$634,681	\$634,681
% change	--	11.0%	0.2%	0.0%
<i>GRF % change</i>	--	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%

Agency overview

In its role overseeing the lawful conduct of elections, the Ohio Elections Commission (ELC) issues advisory opinions on campaign finance questions, responds to questions about campaign activities, and enforces the elections laws relating to campaign activity. Hearings before the Commission typically entail complaints brought against individual candidates, campaign committees, political action committees, or corporations that are required to file financial reports. The Commission also handles cases dealing with various nondisclosure issues. Generally, ELC handles between 800 and 1,000 cases annually. The Commission consists of seven appointed members including three republicans, three democrats, and one independent. The Commission employs a staff of three people, including an executive director, an executive assistant, and an administrative assistant who works on a part-time basis.

Election filing fees

Under the budget, approximately 68.6% of ELC's funding comes from the GRF. The remainder comes from the Ohio Elections Commission Fund (Fund 4P20), which receives a portion of filing fees for petitions of candidacy collected by the Secretary of State, including races for statewide offices and ballot issues, races for Ohio House and Senate seats, and penalties imposed by the Commission. Table 1 on the following page shows these fees and the portion deposited into Fund 4P20. The other portion goes to the GRF.

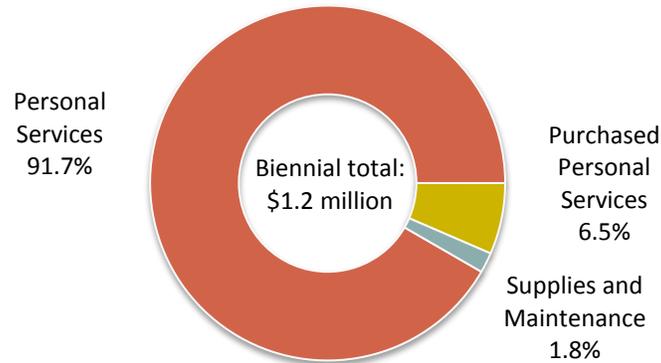
Table 1. Statutory Fees for Election Filings		
Elective Office	Fee	Portion to Fund 4P20
Statewide Elective Offices	\$150	\$50
State Board of Education	\$55	\$35
Judge	\$80	\$30
District – State Legislators, U.S. Representatives	\$85	\$35
City	\$45	\$25
County	\$80	\$30
Township and Village	\$30	\$20
School Board and Educational Service Center	\$30	\$20
Questions and Issues	Fee	Portion to Fund 4P20
Statewide	\$25	\$25
City	\$12.50	\$12.50
County or Multi-District	\$15	\$15
Precinct or Sub-County District	\$10	\$10
School Board/Educational Service Center	\$10	\$10

In FY 2018, Fund 4P20 collected \$217,820 from these various filing fees. The amount collected in FY 2017 was \$80,061. Typically, receipts from these sources are higher in even-numbered years when there are more elections on the ballot across the state. Elections in some even-numbered years generate more revenue than others, depending on the timing of particular four-year election cycles.

Analysis of FY 2020-FY 2021 budget proposal

The executive recommended budget for ELC is \$634,681 in each fiscal year of the FY 2020-FY 2021 biennium. As the chart below shows, the bulk of ELC's budget is devoted to personal services, covering the salaries of the Commission members and staff. This category accounts for \$1,163,613 (91.7%) of total spending over the FY 2020-FY 2021 biennium. Purchased personal services, \$82,392 (6.5%), accounts for the second largest expense category. The remaining \$23,357 (1.8%) of spending is for supplies and maintenance and other miscellaneous expenses.

**ELC Budget by Expense Category
FY 2020-FY 2021 Biennium**



	FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Estimate	FY 2020 Introduced	FY 2021 Introduced
GRF ALI 051321, Operating Expenses						
	\$335,690	\$328,145	\$418,774	\$435,221	\$435,221	\$435,221
% change		-2.2%	27.6%	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Fund 4P20 ALI 051601, Operating Support						
	\$256,276	\$223,571	\$152,133	\$198,495	\$199,460	\$199,460
% change		-12.8%	-32.0%	5.4%	0.5%	0.0%

The money provided under GRF line item 051321, Operating Expenses, pays the salaries and expenses for the seven Commission members and staff. The annual salaries for Commission members are set by statute at \$25,000. This appropriation item also pays the salaries of the Commission staff, which consists of an executive director, who also serves as the staff attorney, an executive assistant, and part-time administrative assistant. The executive recommended funding level for this appropriation item matches FY 2019 estimated expenditures.

The second funding source for ELC’s general operating costs is election filing fees deposited into Fund 4P20. This funding is appropriated under Fund 4P20 line item 051601, Operating Support, and supplements the GRF funding for the Commission’s operating expenses. The current cash balance in Fund 4P20 is \$156,827. The fund has collected \$49,013 in revenues thus far in FY 2019.