



# CITY COMMISSIONERS OFFICE

Lisa M. Deeley, Chairwoman  
Anthony Clark, Commissioner  
Al Schmidt, Vice Chair

## **Testimony of the City Commissioners FY 2019 Operating Budget May 2, 2018**

Good Afternoon, President Clarke and Members of City Council. I am City Commissioner Chairwoman Lisa Deeley. Joining me today are City Commissioner Vice Chair Al Schmidt, Voter Registration Administrator Gregory Irving, and Budget Officer Valarie Crawford-Keith. We are pleased to provide testimony on The Office of the City Commissioners' Fiscal Year 2019 Operating Budget.

The proposed Fiscal Year 2019 General Fund budget totals \$9,965,170, an increase of \$87,188 over Fiscal Year 2018 estimated obligation levels. This increase in Class 100 is due to the contractual 3% pay increase for our DC 33 employees.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$5,926,203 in Class 100, for employee compensation;
- \$3,497,350 in Class 200, for professional services contracts, election board payroll, and polling place rentals;
- \$441,772 in Class 300, for election material printing contracts and office supplies; and
- \$99,845 in Class 400, for computers, furniture, and equipment.

In addition to the proposed budget, we are asking council to consider an additional \$386,200 in Class 200 funding which would allow us to increase the stipend for Election Board workers and to raise the polling place rental fee, both of which have not been raised in at least 30 years. This is specifically needed to address the level of vacancies on our election boards, a nationwide problem, which has reached a crisis level in Philadelphia. Many of our Election Board workers are older and, are for one reason or another, not serving anymore. The younger generations have not stepped up to fill their roles. The board workers were on the ballot in 2017 and we saw a 30% decrease in Judge of Election petitions compared to the same election in 2009. As of today, we have almost 1,200 elected board positions that are unfilled. Our past surveys and feedback from the poll workers indicates low pay is a significant contributing factor to the shortage. Judges of Election would go from \$100 to \$120 per election; Majority and Minority Inspectors of Elections, Clerks, and Machine Inspectors would go from, \$95 to \$115 per election; and the Bilingual Interpreters would go from \$75 to \$95 per election.

Addressing the poll worker shortage is the fiscally responsible move for the city. Since the shortage has begun reaching critical levels, we have been forced to deploy full time and temporary staff to work the polls. They are paid much more than the elected board workers. Last election, we deployed 86 staff members to cover polling places throughout the city, costing over

\$16,000 in regular and overtime pay. These employees were paid an average of \$191.68 for the day, or \$71.68 more than a Judge of Election would make under our proposed increase. We only had enough staff to deploy just two employees to the most critical locations, if we had the available staff, the cost would exceed \$450,000 to fill all the vacancies in this manner.

Our employee demographics as of December 2017 are: 64 male, 37 female, 51 white, 44 African American, 4 Hispanic, 1 Asian, and 1 Other. The demographics of our recent hires are: 5 African American, and 5 White. Our department's OEO goal for M/W/DBE contracts is 32%. Our department's current level is 42%.

During Fiscal Year 2018, the Office of the City Commissioners oversaw the 2017 General Election and will oversee the 2018 Primary Election, which is coming up on May 15th. The 210,838 voters who cast ballots in the 2017 General Election represents a 78% increase in voter turnout from the comparable election cycle four years prior.

Efforts to modernize the department, increase efficiencies, and ensure that the election process is open to everyone will continue to be at the forefront of the commissioners' efforts for FY19. Modernization efforts include for the first time, beginning in FY18, the city commissioners made nomination petitions for committeeperson available to be downloaded and completed electronically. This is a significant step, not only for the efficiency of the department in processing nomination petitions, but also for making the nomination process more accessible. We saw 16.25% of candidates generate their petitions online. We are also working with OIT on a system to allow campaigns and candidates to electronically file campaign finance forms with the County Board of Elections. This will cut down on staff time scanning reports to the website, storage space for paper reports, and allow for a searchable database of electronic reports. Additionally, we are working with the Board of Ethics to enable campaigns and candidates to submit electronic campaign finance reports to both locations simultaneously, cutting down on the current dual reporting that is burdensome to candidates and creates confusion. Our goal is to have this in place in time for next year's Primary Election reporting periods.

In FY18, the department fully implemented its Language Access Plan. Language identification cards have been posted in public-facing offices, supplemental posters and language guides have been distributed to polling places for use on Election Day, staff interpreters have been trained, and the department utilized Language Line for year-round telephonic interpretation services. In FY18, for the first time, all department staff were trained on language access procedures and new public guides were produced in various languages. Also in the second half of FY18, the department designated a Chief Integrity Officer who is tasked with making sure that the department operates with fairness, transparency, and accountability.

The commissioners instituted an aggressive outreach program in FY18. The commissioners and staff attended events throughout the city and held information sessions to provide voters with pertinent information, register voters, and distribute absentee ballot applications. Last month, we augmented our social media footprint when we launched @phillyvotes, our department's own Twitter page. While many people complain about the participation rate of millennial voters, we are making efforts to reach out and communicate with them where they seek news and information. As anyone who follows our Facebook and Twitter

accounts can attest, we are out at events and community meetings everyday – many times attending multiple events a day. Our website traffic continues to increase as we continue to make more and more information available online. During FY 2018, to date, our website has serviced 65,442 unique users up from 36,341 unique users in FY 2014, the last comparable election fiscal year.

For the past year, before the Department of State's press release instructing counties to select new voting systems, we have been working with the administration, OIT, procurement, public property, and the law department, to begin the process of procuring electronic poll books and a new voting system. This is a very complicated process, as we look to select a system that Philadelphians will feel confident in while exercising their right to vote. Under a normal procurement timeline, a roll out of the new machines would occur for the 2021 General Election. This timeline meets the Department of State's criteria while also protecting the longterm interests of the citizens of Philadelphia.

We are unsure about what the total cost will be to implement a new voting system but based on our preliminary conversations the cost will likely exceed the previously estimated \$22 million figure. We are currently working with OIT on our RFIs to gather more information on this and will share with you more information once we have it.

We appreciate this opportunity to present our testimony and are happy to answer any questions you have at this time.