

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 (ELC) oversees political party spending, campaign finance, and corporate political contributions to ensure compliance with the Ohio Elections Law.
- The Commission consists of seven members appointed for five-year terms: three democrats, three republicans, and one unaffiliated with any political party. It is staffed by a full-time executive director, one administrative professional, and a part-time administrative aide.
- The executive budget recommends funding of \$812,600 in FY 2026 and \$885,100 in FY 2027. Uses of recommended funding: \$1.6 million over the biennium (94.7%) for payroll and approximately \$90,700 (5.3%) over the biennium for supplies and maintenance and other expenses.
- A replacement executive director will be hired to overlap with the current executive director who is retiring, resulting in higher payroll costs for the upcoming biennium.
- There is a proposed increase in election filing fees of either \$5 or \$10, depending on the position. The additional revenue will be deposited into the Elections Commission Fund (Fund 4P20). ELC estimates approximately \$10,000 in additional revenue over the biennium.

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
GRF ALI 051321, Operating Expenses					
\$398,454	\$404,044	\$414,998	\$432,000	\$587,000	\$659,500
% change	1.4%	2.7%	4.1%	35.9%	12.4%
Fund 4P20 ALI 051601, Operating Support					
\$233,135	\$204,077	\$285,002	\$210,000	\$225,600	\$225,600
% change	-12.5%	39.7%	-26.3%	7.4%	0.0%
Total funding:					
\$631,589	\$608,121	\$700,001	\$642,000	\$812,600	\$885,100
% change	-3.7%	15.1%	-8.3%	26.6%	8.9%

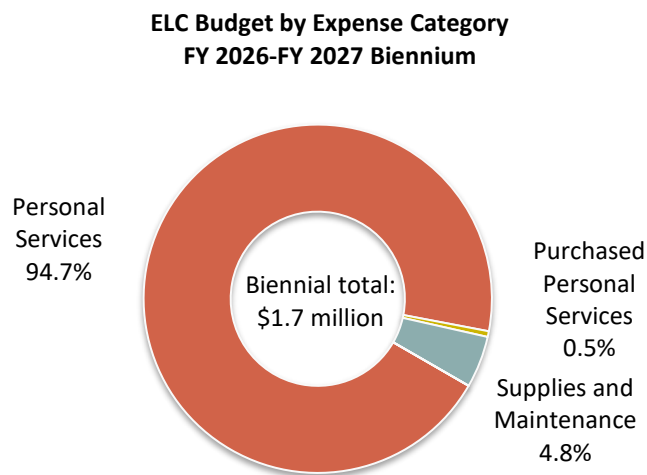
Agency overview

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. ELC adjudicated 618 cases in calendar year 2024. The Commission consists of seven appointed members including three republicans, three democrats, and one independent

servicing five-year terms. The Commission employs a staff of three people, including an executive director, administrative professional, and a part-time administrative aide. The current executive director is planning to retire. Under the proposed budget, ELC would hire a replacement executive director to overlap with the current executive director to smooth the transition. Additionally, the budget proposes an increase in statutory fees for election filings by either \$5 or \$10, depending on the position. The additional filing fee revenue will be deposited into the Elections Commission Fund (Fund 4P20) generating an estimated \$10,000 over the biennium.

Analysis of FY 2026-FY 2027 budget proposal

The executive recommended budget for ELC is \$812,600 in FY 2026 and \$885,100 in FY 2027. Overall, 73.4% of funding comes from the GRF and 26.6% comes from Fund 4P20. 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 over \$1.6 million (94.7%) of total spending over the biennium. Of the remainder, roughly \$81,500 (4.8%) goes to supplies and maintenance, \$9,000 (0.5%) goes to purchased personal services, and \$200 (0.0%) to judgments, settlements, and bonds.



Operating Expenses (ALI 051321)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
GRF ALI 051321, Operating Expenses					
\$398,454	\$404,044	\$414,998	\$432,000	\$587,000	\$659,500
% change	1.4%	2.7%	4.1%	35.9%	12.4%

The executive recommended funding level for this GRF ALI is \$587,000 in FY 2026 and \$659,500 in FY 2027, providing about nearly three-quarters (73.4%) of funding for the FY 2026-FY 2027 biennium. Given its function and as noted in the chart above, payroll costs constitute the bulk of the Commission’s expenses. The payroll covers seven Commission members, two full-time

staff members, and one part-time staff member. The annual salaries for Commission members are set by statute at \$25,000. The staff consists of an executive director, who also serves as the staff attorney, an administrative professional, and an administrative aide.

Operating Support (ALI 051601)

FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Introduced	FY 2027 Introduced
Fund 4P20 ALI 051601, Operating Support					
\$233,135	\$204,077	\$285,002	\$210,000	\$225,600	\$225,600
% change	-12.5%	39.7%	-26.3%	7.4%	0.0%

The executive recommended funding under the Ohio Elections Commission Fund (Fund 4P20) ALI 051601, Operating Support, is \$255,600 in each fiscal year. It provides supplementary funding for ELC’s operations. The funding source for ELC’s general operating costs is election filing fees and fines. As noted above, the budget contains increases in filing fees for certain elected offices. In total, ELC estimates that these increases will generate approximately \$10,000 over the biennium. The cash balance of Fund 4P20 as of February 2025 is \$85,063.

Election filing fees

Table 1 below shows the fees charged for various elections-related filings with the Secretary of State. Also shown are the portions distributed to the GRF and Fund 4P20. Among the types of filings are petitions of candidacy, including races for statewide offices and ballot issues, and races for Ohio House and Senate seats. Proposed fee and distribution increases are listed in Table 2 below.

Elective Office	Fee	Portion to Fund 4P20
Statewide Elective Offices	\$150	\$50
State Board of Education	\$55	\$35
Judge – Court of Appeals, Common Pleas	\$80	\$30
Judge – County Court, Municipal Court	\$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

Elective Office	Proposed Fee	Portion to Fund 4P20	Total Change
Statewide Elective Offices	\$160	\$60	\$10
State Board of Education	\$60	\$40	\$5
Judge – Court of Appeals, Common Pleas	\$90	\$40	\$10
Judge – County Court, Municipal Court	\$85	\$35	\$5
District – State Legislators, U.S. Representatives	\$90	\$40	\$5
City	\$50	\$30	\$5
County	\$85	\$35	\$5
Township and Village	\$30	\$20	\$0
School Board and Educational Service Center	\$30	\$20	\$0

Receipts

In FY 2024, Fund 4P20 collected \$298,763 from these various filing fees and fines. The amount collected so far in FY 2025 is \$82,999. The typical pattern is for more to be collected in an even-numbered fiscal year and coincides with the schedule of local and statewide elections under Ohio law. Because filing fees have remained unchanged, the amounts collected from this source remains fairly consistent from one biennium to the next, around \$400,000 for every two-year period. The proposed fee increases will yield additional revenue dependent on the number and type of election filings submitted in the biennium. ELC estimates this amount to be approximately \$10,000 over the biennium. The amount collected from fines can be more variable and depends on what types of cases come before the Commission.