



## Proposed DuPage County Election Commission and County Clerk Consolidation Plan

### Goal

To create an organizational model that merges the operations and responsibilities of the DuPage County Election Commission with the Office of the County Clerk, eliminating an unnecessary layer of government. This new model will increase efficiency, transparency, and the accountability of elections in DuPage County while maintaining an independent, bi-partisan oversight board that offers public access to the decision-making process regarding election policy.

### Background

- Since 1974, the DuPage County Election Commission has been the election authority for the County. Per state statute, in the absence of an election commission, the elected county clerk serves as the election authority, which is the case throughout Illinois, except for the cities of Aurora, Bloomington, Chicago, Danville, East St. Louis, Galesburg and Rockford that have established municipal election commissions and the one other county election commission (Peoria).
- The DuPage Election Commission is currently a three-member, bi-partisan panel appointed by the County Board Chairman that includes representatives from the two major political parties (two from the party of the County Board Chairman and one from the other political party).
- The role of the Election Commission is to ensure accurate, accessible and secure elections throughout the County on behalf of the 615,000 registered voters pursuant to federal and state election laws.
- The Election Commission currently appoints the Executive Director who oversees a staff of 23 employees who are responsible for administering all aspects of the election process.
- In recent years, the election process has also changed, in part due to the increases in technology: online voter registration, the expansion of early voting and the ease of voting by mail or absentee ballot have all significantly altered how elections are administered.
- The number of polling locations has also been significantly reduced in recent years (and the associated costs of judges, equipment, etc.) from more than 700 sites to 254 polling locations currently.
- The DuPage County Clerk oversees a staff of 19 employees and is responsible for processing vital records requests and for issuing a number of licenses including marriage, civil union, business, liquor, raffle, tobacco, notary and business licenses.
- Both the County Clerk's office and the Election Commission experience a high volume of public inquiries on a daily basis. Due to the large number of these customer interactions, the County can merge and cross-train staffs to create greater efficiencies, reduce duplication and administrative costs and enhance customer service.

### Proposal

Since the implementation of the ACT Initiative, the County has identified a number of administrative functions that could be shared by the Clerk's Office and the Election Commission. To date, the County and the Election Commission have already saved taxpayers an estimated \$3 million through the adoption of revised procurement policies, IT consolidation and shared services.

To continue to build upon the savings already achieved, the County is proposing to consolidate the Election Commission with the County Clerk's office. This proposal increases the number of commissioners from three to five, preserving and expanding the bipartisan oversight of the election process. The County Clerk would assume responsibilities for procurement, the hiring of staff and other day-to-day functions under an Election Division. The newly formed five-member Board of Election Commissioners would set election policy, hold public meetings and receive public comment.

### Highlights of Proposed Legislation

- Preserves and expands existing bipartisan oversight of the election process and maintains open and transparent public meetings to ensure continued accountability.
- Authorizes any county to establish a county Board of Election Commissioners within the Office of the County Clerk by ordinance of the County Board and with the consent of the County Clerk.
- Creates a new five-member Board of Election Commissioners, expanding bi-partisan representation.
- The board sets policy with regard to the election process, including the registration of voters, filing of petitions, certification of candidates, preparation of ballots, establishment of election precincts, designation of polling places and other matters related to the conduct of elections.
- The County Clerk serves as Chairman of the Board of Election Commissioners, but will not receive any additional compensation or stipend.
- The other four Election Commissioners are appointed by the DuPage County Board Chairman with the advice and consent of the County Board. Two commissioners are chosen from each of the two leading, established political parties and in consultation with elected officials who are members of the respective leading political parties.
- The County Board sets, by ordinance, the salaries of the four Election Commissioners that may not exceed 50% of a County Board Member's salary.
- The Election Commission shall meet at least quarterly and is subject to the Open Meetings Act.
- The establishment of a Board of Election Commissioners under a County Clerk preempts any municipal election authority (i.e., in DuPage County the portions of Aurora located in DuPage County would remain under the jurisdiction of the County, now the County Clerk, and not the Aurora Election Commission).
- The Board of Election Commissioners established under the County Clerk also serves as the Electoral Board for purposes of hearing election challenges.

### Next Steps

- Residents are invited to provide comments at [www.dupageco.org/ECProposal](http://www.dupageco.org/ECProposal).
- A public hearing on the proposal will be held on Jan. 10, 2017, directly following the regularly scheduled County Board meeting in the County Board Room, JTK Administration Building (approximately 11 a.m.).
- Legislation will be finalized and introduced in early February for consideration during the spring 2017 session.
- Legislation adopted by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor would take effect by Sept. 1, 2017.
- The County Board adopts the required ordinance to establish a DuPage County Board of Election Commissioners in the fall with a transition period to conclude by the start of the new county fiscal year beginning Dec. 1, 2017.