

Redbook

LBO Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal

Ohio Elections Commission

Terry Steele, Senior Budget Analyst
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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 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 and one administrative professional.
- The executive budget recommends funding of \$625,500 in FY 2024 and \$642,000 in FY 2025. Uses of recommended funding: \$1.1 million over the biennium (88.7%) for payroll and approximately \$144,000 (11.4%) over the biennium for supplies and maintenance and other expenses.

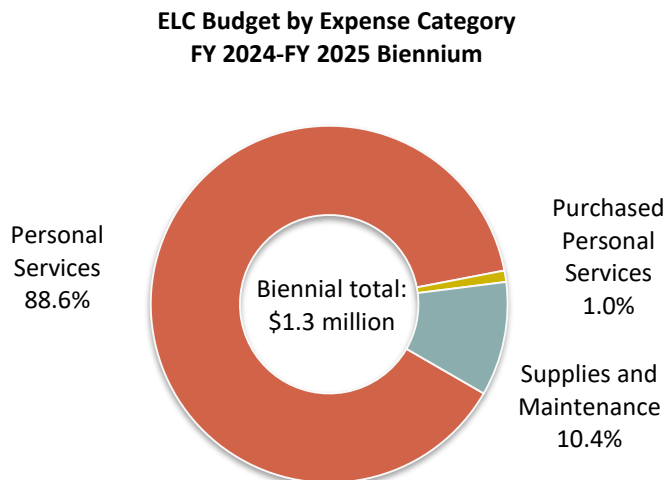
FY 2020 Actual	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2024 Introduced	FY 2025 Introduced
GRF ALI 051321, Operating Expenses					
\$436,420	\$404,282	\$398,454	\$404,044	\$415,500	\$432,000
% change	-7.4%	-1.4%	1.4%	2.8%	4.0%
Fund 4P20 ALI 051601, Operating Support					
\$145,316	\$184,388	\$233,135	\$227,720	\$210,000	\$210,000
% change	26.9%	26.4%	-2.3%	-7.8%	0.0%
Total funding:					
\$581,736	\$588,670	\$631,589	\$631,764	\$625,500	\$642,000
% change	1.2%	7.3%	0.0%	-1.0%	2.6%

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. Generally, ELC adjudicates approximately 500 cases annually. The Commission consists of seven appointed members including three republicans, three democrats, and one independent serving five-year terms. The Commission employs a staff of two people, including an executive director and an administrative professional.

Analysis of FY 2024-FY 2025 budget proposal

The executive recommended budget for ELC is \$625,500 in FY 2024 and \$642,000 in FY 2025. 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 \$1.1 million (88.7%) of total spending over the biennium. Of the remainder, roughly \$131,000 (10.4%) goes to supplies and maintenance, and \$13,000 (1.0%) goes to purchased personal services.



Operating Expenses (ALI 051321)

The executive recommended funding level for this GRF appropriation line item (ALI) is \$415,500 in FY 2024 and \$432,000 in FY 2025, providing about two-thirds (66.9%) of funding for the FY 2024-FY 2025 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 and the two full-time staff members. (During the current biennium, a part time employee was laid off to cut costs at the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic.) The annual salaries for Commission members are set by statute at \$25,000. The staff consists of two full-time employees: an executive director, who also serves as the staff attorney, and an administrative professional.

Operating Support (ALI 051601)

The executive recommended funding under the Ohio Elections Commission Fund (Fund 4P20) ALI 051601, Operating Support, is \$210,000 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. The cash balance of Fund 4P20 as of February 2023 is \$168,721.

Election filing fees

The table on the following page 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.

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

Receipts

In FY 2022, Fund 4P20 collected \$271,667 from these various filing fees. The amount collected so far in FY 2023 is \$119,839. 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 amount collected from fines can be more variable, and depends on what types of cases come before the Commission.