

Greenbook

LBO Analysis of Enacted Budget

Ohio Elections Commission

Terry Steele, Senior Budget Analyst
July 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Quick look	1
Overview	1
Analysis of FY 2020-FY 2021 budget	2
Operating Expenses (ALI 051321)	3
Operating Support (ALI 051601)	3

LBO Greenbook

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 whom are democrats, three of whom are republicans, and one independent. As of July 2019, the Commission was staffed by a full-time executive director, an administrative assistant, and a part-time executive secretary.
- The budget provides appropriations of \$634,681 in each fiscal year of the FY 2020-FY 2021 biennium, an increase of 6.5% over FY 2019 spending of \$595,909.
 - Overall, 68.6% of the funding comes from the GRF, with the remainder coming from a portion of election filing fees and penalties for election law violations collected by the Commission.

Fund Group	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Actual	FY 2020 Appropriations	FY 2021 Appropriations
General Revenue	\$418,774	\$427,496	\$435,221	\$435,221
Dedicated Purpose	\$152,133	\$168,413	\$199,460	\$199,460
Total	\$570,907	\$595,909	\$634,681	\$634,681
% change	--	4.4%	6.5%	0.0%
<i>GRF % change</i>	--	2.1%	1.8%	0.0%

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 handles between 800 and 1,000 cases annually. The Commission consists of seven appointed members including three republicans, three democrats, and one independent. As of July 2019, ELC's full-time staff consisted of the Executive Director and administrative assistant, and an executive secretary who works on a part-time basis.

Approximately 68.6% of ELC's budget for the FY 2020-FY 2021 biennium comes from the GRF. The remainder comes from 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 that are deposited into the Ohio Elections Commission Fund (Fund 4P20). The table on the following page shows these fees and the portion deposited into Fund 4P20. The other portion goes to the GRF.

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 2019 was \$85,883. Fluctuations between even and odd-numbered years are to be expected, since there are more elections on the ballot across the state in even-numbered years and fewer in odd-numbered years.

Analysis of FY 2020-FY 2021 budget

The bulk of ELC's budget is devoted to personal services, covering the salaries of the Commission members and staff. In particular, each of the seven Commission members is paid an annual salary of \$25,000, as fixed by statute. Overall, the amounts slated for the salaries of the Commission members as well as the salaries of the administrative staff amount to approximately \$1.2 million (91.7%) of the Commission's budget for the FY 2020-FY 2021 biennium. At \$82,392 (6.5%), purchased personal services accounts for the second largest expense category. The remaining \$23,357 (1.8%) of the budget is for supplies and maintenance and other miscellaneous expenses.

Operating Expenses (ALI 051321)

FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Actual	FY 2020 Appropriation	FY 2021 Appropriation
GRF ALI 051321, Operating Expenses					
\$335,690	\$328,145	\$418,774	\$427,496	\$435,221	\$435,221
% change	-2.2%	27.6%	2.1%	1.8%	0.0%

The money provided under GRF line item 051321, Operating Expenses, pays for most of the salaries and expenses for the seven Commission members and staff and other general operating expenses incurred by ELC. The annual salaries for Commission members are set by statute at \$25,000. As of July 2019, the full-time staff employed by the Commission consisted of the Executive Director, who also serves as the staff attorney, and two other employees, one of whom works on a part-time basis. The Commission's offices are located on the 18th floor of the Riffe Center in Columbus.

Operating Support (ALI 051601)

FY 2016 Actual	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Actual	FY 2020 Appropriation	FY 2021 Appropriation
Fund 4P20 ALI 051601, Operating Support					
\$256,276	\$223,571	\$152,133	\$168,413	\$199,460	\$199,460
% change	-12.8%	-32.0%	10.7%	18.4%	0.0%

Although most of the funding for Commission operations comes from the GRF, some of these costs are covered by a portion of election filing fees that are deposited into Fund 4P20. The fund collected \$85,883 in revenues from these various filing fees and other similar sources in FY 2019, down from the \$217,820 collected in FY 2019. As noted previously, these year-to-year changes correspond to the election cycle, with more filing fee income collected during even-numbered years when there are more elections on the ballot.