

THE ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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WHAT IS THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS?

The State Board of Elections is an independent state agency that was provided for by the 1970 Illinois Constitution to supervise the registration of voters and the administration of elections throughout the state.

WHO CREATED THE BOARD?

The Illinois State Board of Elections was created by the Illinois General Assembly in 1973. The Board's purpose is to serve as the central authority for all Illinois election law, information and procedures in Illinois.

WHAT IS ITS MAKEUP?

The Board is an 8-member, bipartisan panel consisting of four Republicans and four Democrats, two of each party from Cook County and two of each party from downstate. Day-to-day agency operations are handled by a full-time, professional staff in the Springfield and Chicago offices.

HOW ARE BOARD MEMBERS SELECTED?

The governor appoints four members from his own political party and selects from a list of nominees submitted to him by the highest ranking official of the opposite political party. Board members serve staggered, four-year terms. They elect a Chairman and a Vice Chairman of opposite political parties. The Chairman and Vice Chairman serve two-year terms on a party rotation basis.

HOW DOES THE BOARD FUNCTION?

Recommendations for new laws, new interpretations, different procedures, forms, etc., come to the Board from its own staff, election authorities, and a wide variety of other sources. All of these recommendations are thoroughly researched, discussed, and considered for action at open, public meetings. Five members of the Board are necessary to constitute a quorum and five votes are necessary for any action of the Board to become effective.

WHEN DOES THE BOARD MEET?

State law requires that the board meet at least once per month. Meetings are held in the Springfield and Chicago offices, rotating between the two on a monthly basis. Special meetings and hearings are often necessary.

WHO ACTUALLY CONDUCTS ELECTIONS IN ILLINOIS?

Elections are administered locally by the state's 109 election authorities. These are the county clerks in 100 counties, two county election commissions and 7 municipal election commissions. These local authorities are a very important part of Illinois' election process. As part of their many responsibilities they handle local voter registration programs, train election judges, select polling places, get ballots printed, oversee Election Day activities, and supervise the vote count at the local level.

HOW DOES THE STATE BOARD WORK WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES?

The State Board of Elections works closely in all parts of the State with the election authorities by answering their questions and generally providing the information necessary to conduct elections effectively in accordance with Illinois law. Ongoing meetings with election authorities are conducted, encouraging an exchange of ideas and information to improve the state's election process.

WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT THE ILLINOIS ELECTION PROCESS?

Illinois elects more than 40,000 public officials and has well over 6,000 units of local government in the state – more than any other state. A major objective of the State Board of Elections is to make election procedures uniform throughout the state so that every voter and every governmental unit has access to the same information and is subject to the same rules concerning election procedures.

HOW DOES THE STATE BOARD DEAL WITH CHARGES OF VOTING IRREGULARITIES AND FRAUD?

Claims of irregularity or fraud in any Illinois election presented to the board are carefully and thoroughly considered. Most often, clarification of the law resolves the problems. The Board is not a police agency but has the power to review and refer apparent violations to law enforcement agencies. The Board's role is to see that procedures provided for by state law are complied with throughout the state.

WHAT ABOUT ELECTION REFORM?

Since the State Board of Elections is the only related agency that has statewide jurisdiction, it is in the unique position of recognizing the differences in election terminology and procedures in various parts of the state. This statewide overview makes it possible for the Board to gather information and offer recommendations to the General Assembly to simplify and bring uniformity to the election process.

WHAT ABOUT CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE?

The Campaign Financing Act covers the public's right to know certain financial information about candidates, elected officials and those individuals and groups who are financially involved in political campaigns. The State Board of Elections supervises the administration of the Campaign Finance Act and monitors campaign receipts and expenditures which appear on reports submitted by candidates and committees as required by law. These reports, detailing contributions and expenditures, give the media and the public information on where candidate received their campaign money and where it is being spent. Board hearings are held if suspected or actual violations of the Campaign Financing Act occur. The Board is authorized to levy fines and turn over evidence of wrongdoing to local prosecutors.

WHAT DOES THE BOARD DO BETWEEN ELECTIONS?

The Board's supervision of elections involves a number of activities on a year-round basis. Board staff members are continually involved in developing technical manuals and statistical publications, and during every two-year election cycle Board staff conducts over 200 training programs for election judges and officials across the state.

The State Board is regularly called upon for guidance and the Board's professional staff members are constantly in the process of collecting information, providing educational materials and programs, and acquiring the knowledge necessary to simplify and improve the elections process for Illinois citizens who comprise what is one of the busiest electorates in the country.

THE BOARD'S FUNCTIONS INCLUDE:

- Adoption of rules and regulations to clarify and improve the election process in Illinois.
- Supervision, inspection and review of all election and registration processes in the state by maintaining a statewide voter registration database.
- Preparation and distribution of uniform manuals of instruction and other materials to election authorities.
- Preparation and circulation of canvasses of primary and general election returns filed with the Board.
- Determination of validity and receipt of nominating petitions and certificates of nomination.
- Dissemination of information and counsel on elections.
- Investigations and hearings of election complaints and problems.
- Recommendation of new legislation and evaluation of pending legislation to the Illinois General Assembly.
- Approval of voting equipment and devices for use in the state.
- Development and administration of education programs for election authorities, candidates and the general public.
- Determination of validity of petitions submitted by popular initiative for constitutional amendments and advisory referenda.
- Certification of ballot forms of constitutional amendments and other statewide referenda.
- Proclamation of election results.
- Administration of the Campaign Financing Act.

Illinois State Board of Elections website: www.elections.il.gov

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