

“The Beginning” by Jack Larson

“The 34th General Assembly of the State of Illinois commenced January 7, 1885 and adjourned on June 26, 1885. During this session on June 19th, a section of the election law (code) enacted and/or amended the possibility of every city, village and incorporated town to create a Board of Election Commissioners.”

“A Manual of Election Laws of Illinois” published in 1922 lists the following cities as having election commissions:

Chicago	November 9, 1885
East St. Louis	November 8, 1886
Springfield	November 6, 1906
Galesburg	November 3, 1908
Danville	April 20, 1909
Cairo	November 8, 1909
Rockford	November 14, 1910
Freeport, Bloomington & Peoria	November 3, 1914

LATER

Aurora	November 6, 1934
DuPage	Established by resolution on November 30, 1973

The history of the Illinois Election Commissioners is long and historical. The objective of this organization is to enhance the proper and efficient conduct of elections by providing a forum for the sharing of the strengths and experiences of Election Commissions. One of the goals is to help preserve the structure of Court appointed officials for the bipartisan conduct of elections.



Established to provide accurate and unbiased elections independent of elected officials.



ELECTION COMMISSIONS

WHAT IS AN ELECTION COMMISSION?

Election Commissions in Illinois are made up of citizens appointed by a circuit court judge to conduct elections in a city or county where the voters have passed a referendum to establish an Election Commission. By law, Election Commissioners are selected from the two leading political parties, one from each such party, so that there is bipartisan oversight of the elections that are conducted by Election Commissions. No Election Commissioner can hold any political office while serving as a Commissioner. By law, Election Commissioners must be persons of approved integrity and ability.

Having elections administered by bipartisan Election Commissions has proven to be the best way to assure that elections are conducted in a fair and impartial manner, free from the influence of partisan elected officials and political parties.

Most people agree that it's good political science to have elections administered with bi-partisan oversight.

Poli-sci reasons for establishing and maintaining election commissions

In most parts of the United States and Illinois, elections are run by county clerks and secretaries of state. Those officials are usually politicians nominated in political party primaries and elected in partisan elections. They often remain active members of their political party because they are subject to re-election at the end of their terms of office, usually every four years. Therefore, they tend to remain subject to political influences throughout their terms and they are often in charge of administering elections in which their own names appear on the ballot as partisan candidates for re-election.

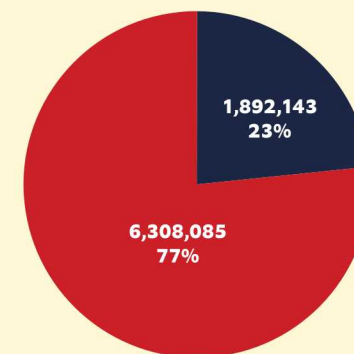
Under the Illinois Election Code, residents of municipalities and counties can choose to insulate their elections from outside political influences by establishing an election commission. When an election commission is formed—usually by a referendum voted on by the city's or county's electors—direct control of elections is transferred from the partisan county clerk to an independent board of election commissioners.

The members of a board of election commissioners created by referendum are appointed by the judges of the circuit court for the county in which the commission is located. Since the election commissioners answer to the judicial branch of government, they are independent of and insulated from the partisan elected officials in the legislative and executive branches of government. Their efforts remain focused on the professional administration of voter registration and public elections. Although incumbent election commissioners are subject to re-appointment by their county judges, they never have to seek nomination in a political party primary nor seek re-election in a partisan election. No commissioner can hold any other political office while serving on an election commission.

Insulation from political influences helps foster transparency and can result in higher voter confidence in the accuracy and integrity of their elections. There is no clear evidence that elections run by partisan county clerks are less expensive than those run by independent election commissions, so there is no substantial extra cost for the additional integrity an election commission can provide. With staggered terms of office for its several members, an election commission can also bring more stability and consistency to elections than a partisan county clerk, since a different politician may be elected county clerk as often as every four years.



ILLINOIS COMMISSIONS



■ Total active registered voters by Commissions
■ Total active registered voters by Elected Officials

Bloomington	50,602 voters
Chicago	1,579,803 voters
Danville	17,341 voters
East St. Louis	18,043 voters
Galesburg	18,223 voters
Peoria County	120,074 voters
Rockford	88,057 voters
Illinois Total	8,200,228 voters

Source: Illinois State Board of Elections website - 04/15/2019



Where are Illinois' Election Commissions?