

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Executive Committee
From: Ashley Reichert, County Clerk
Date: May 8, 2024
Re: 2024 Election Integrity Initiatives

STRATEGIC PRIORITY/RESULT ACHIEVED:

Well Governed and Administered County

DISCUSSION:

To further enhance the public confidence in our election processes and election integrity, implementing the following initiatives is a crucial component.

Firstly, providing funding to our municipalities to have the ability to voluntarily offer extended in-person absentee voting hours beyond what is typically offered during the in-person absentee voting time period leading up to the November 5, 2024 election, allows for more voter participation at the voter's convenience, ensuring broader accessibility and transparency.

Supporting voluntary municipal-level audits with dedicated funds can provide granular scrutiny of voting procedures and outcomes, bolstering public trust. Expanding upon this approach, by also funding an additional countywide audit of all ballots cast in the November 5, 2024 election further underscores a commitment to thorough verification and accuracy. This is similar to previously done voluntary hand count audits at the county level, such as November of 2022.

Additionally, by providing funding to buy-back the central count machines previously purchased by our municipalities with central count locations, allowing for those specific municipalities to have the opportunity to eliminate the central count process, replacing it with the standard precinct-based counting process.

Lastly, investing in robust physical protection for the storage and transport of our voting equipment, ensuring that our voting equipment remains secure and protected.

Together, these measures can significantly reinforce the electoral process's integrity and assist in restoring public confidence in the democratic system.

Election Initiatives

Cost Estimates

In-person absentee hours	\$40,500
Voluntary Audits (highest-cost scenario)	\$6,750
County-wide Audit	\$15,000

Central Count	
Machine Buy-Back	\$60,000
<u>Hard Cases</u>	<u>\$20,000</u>
Subtotal	\$142,250
Contingency (about 5%)	\$7,750
<u>Grand Total</u>	<u>\$150,000</u>

FISCAL EFFECT:

Funding the 2024 Election Integrity Initiatives will have a fiscal effect of up to \$150,000.

ATTACHMENTS:

2024 Election Integrity Initiatives Resolution

RECOMMENDATION:

Motion transfer from the General Fund to the County Clerk's budget in the amount of \$150,000 to fund elections initiatives to municipalities as follows: county funding for municipalities to provide enhanced in-person absentee hours on a voluntary basis, county funding for voluntary election audits, funding for a county-wide election audit, funding for buying back machines used for the central count function, and county funding for the purchase of hard cases for elections machines.

1 **WASHINGTON COUNTY, WISCONSIN**

2 Date of enactment: _____

3 Date of publication: _____

4 **2024 RESOLUTION** _____

5 **General Fund Transfer for Elections Initiatives**

6 **WHEREAS**, Washington County strives to create an environment for residents and
7 businesses to enjoy our authentic quality of life through a well governed and administered county
8 dedicated to safe and secure communities; economic growth and vitality; effective mobility and
9 reliable infrastructure; and access to basic needs; and

10 **WHEREAS**, election integrity is a critical aspect of this country’s democratic system and
11 it is crucial that we ensure our elections are transparent, accessible, and free from manipulation;
12 and

13 **WHEREAS**, faith in our country’s electoral system has been declining, which further
14 undermines our democracy, the need for continuous improvement and vigilance in our election
15 processes is crucial in maintaining and improving the public trust of our electoral process; and

16 **WHEREAS**, to this end, Washington County officials have identified several initiatives
17 that will continue to enhance the integrity of our elections including: county funding for
18 municipalities to provide enhanced in-person absentee hours on a voluntary basis, county funding
19 for voluntary election audits, funding for a county-wide election audit, funding for buying back
20 machines used for the central count function, and county funding for the purchase of hard cases
21 for elections machines; and

22 **WHEREAS**, a General Fund Transfer of up to \$150,000 is requested for the purpose of
23 funding the elections initiatives described; and

24 **WHEREAS**, Section 15-61 of the Washington County Code states that Transfers and
25 appropriations authorized under § 65.90(5)(ar), Wis. Stats., requiring County Board approval shall
26 be made upon the recommendation of the appropriate standing committee and by resolution
27 adopted by a vote of 2/3 of the members-elect;

28 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Washington County Board of
29 Supervisors that an amount not to exceed \$150,000 shall be transferred from the General Fund to
30 the County Clerk budget to fund the elections initiatives to municipalities described above.

31 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the County Clerk shall report to the Executive
32 Committee no later than the regular December 2024 meeting on the results of the initiatives.

1 VOTE REQUIREMENT FOR PASSAGE: 2/3 of the members elect

2

3 RESOLUTION SUMMARY: Transfer from the General Fund to the County Clerk's budget in
4 the amount of \$150,000 to fund elections initiatives to municipalities as follows: county funding
5 for municipalities to provide enhanced in-person absentee hours on a voluntary basis, county
6 funding for voluntary election audits, funding for a county-wide election audit, funding for buying
7 back machines used for the central count function, and county funding for the purchase of hard
8 cases for elections machines.

9

10 Approved as to form: _____ Introduced by members of the EXECUTIVE
11 _____ COMMITTEE as filed with the County Clerk.

12 Bradley S. Stern, County Attorney

13 Dated _____

14 Jeffrey D. Schleif, Chairperson

15 Approved:
16 _____

17 Josh Schoemann, County Executive Considered _____

18 Dated _____ Adopted _____

19 Veto Ayes _____ Noes _____ Absent _____
Voice Vote _____

20 Partial Veto

21

22 (The proposed transfer will reduce the General Fund balance by \$150,000. The funds have a
23 specific use for election initiatives and any unused funds will return to the General Fund. Based
24 on current financial information (and other pending general fund requests), the County will remain
25 in compliance with the Fund Reserve Policy after making this transfer.)