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# **The DuPage County Election Commission**

## **Organization of Illinois Election Authorities**

Several states have uniform election systems, whereas other states allow individual counties to oversee the administration of all elections held within the state. In Illinois, Illinois State Board of Elections supervises the administration of elections conducted by 110 county and city election authorities.

## **The Illinois State Board of Elections**

The Illinois State Board of Elections supervises the registration of voters and the administration of elections throughout the state. The Board consists of four Republicans and four Democrats appointed by the Governor to serve staggered, four-year terms. A full-time professional staff with offices located in both Springfield and Chicago handle the day-to-day activities. The State Board of Elections supervises the administration of the Illinois Campaign Financing Act and closely monitors campaign expenditures appearing on reports submitted by candidates and committees as required by law. All candidates for office in Illinois are required to file financial disclosure forms with the Illinois State Board of Elections. Local and county candidates must also file with their local county clerk. The Board conducts hearings if violations occur and is authorized to levy fines and turn over evidence of wrongdoing to local prosecutors.

The Illinois State Board of Elections provides a variety of information for voters and candidates, including how to register to vote, election totals, searchable referenda database, and searchable candidate database detailing campaign contributions. The Illinois State Board of Elections serves as a resource for county and city election authorities and provides a variety of assistance program and training opportunities. The Illinois State Board of Elections website is [www.elections.state.il.us](http://www.elections.state.il.us).

## **County and City Election Authorities**

The state's 110 election authorities administer local elections. County clerks in 101 counties administer elections, as well as the eight municipal election authorities, and one county election commission. The DuPage County Election Commission is the only county-wide election authority in the state. Each election authority handles local voter registration programs, trains election judges, finds polling places, gets ballots printed, oversees election day activities, and supervises the vote count at the local level. Additional information, including address and phone number, for each county and municipal election authority can be obtained by visiting the Illinois State Board of Elections website or contacting local government offices.

## **DuPage County Election Commission**

The DuPage County Election Commission serves both the voters and the political parties of DuPage County, and is responsible for administering all elections in DuPage County, including Local, County, State and Federal Elections. The DuPage County Election Commission website is [www.dupageelections.com](http://www.dupageelections.com).

## **Creation of the DuPage County Election Commission**

Illinois law creates the Election Commission for cities, villages, incorporated towns (10 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 5/6-21 (West 1993)) and for counties (10 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 5/6A-1 (West 1993)). Although the law creates the Election Commission, it does not make the creation of an Election Commission mandatory for cities, villages, incorporated towns or counties. The DuPage County Election Commission was created on January 29, 1974. The Election Commission Board consists of three members that have no statutory term limit. Two of the board members must be selected from the two leading political parties in the state and the third member can be from any political party. 10 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 5/6-22 (West 1993 & Supp. 1998).

## **Duties of the DuPage County Election Commission**

The Election Commission is responsible for administering all elections within DuPage County. Leading up to the election, the Election Commission produces voting ballots based on petitions, organizes polling locations, trains and provides election judges, coordinates security, and places legal notice of the election in the paper. When there are no elections to administer, the Election Commission maintains 730 precincts, calculates area populations, and redistricts precincts during odd-numbered years. One of the most important duties of the Election Commission is to serve as the “keeper” of voter registration records. Currently approximately 491,000 registered voters are on file. Throughout the year, the DuPage County Election Commission trains and supplies several thousand voter-registrars. Strict rules, regulations, and laws govern documentation that must be recorded in the voter file. The Election Commission is obligated to protect this information from solicitors, however, it may release voter rolls to people affiliated with bona fide political organizations.

## **DuPage County Election Commission Board of Directors**

**Chairman:** Dean Westrom (R) – served since 1997

**Vice Chairman:** Jeanne McNamara (D) – served since 1976

**Secretary:** Charlotte Muchow (R) – served since 1999

**Executive Director:** Robert Saar

**Assistant Director:** Doreen Nelson

The Board of Directors regulates the Election Commission with the assistance of the Executive Director and a staff of 20. Bi-monthly the Board meets to conduct general business, discuss and approve expenses, set policy, and discuss any litigation. Board meetings are open to the public and take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month.

## **DuPage County Election Commission Web Site**

The Election Commission web site has a comprehensive collection of information available for voters, candidates, and the general public. The site contains voting information, including how to register, where to register, and information on elected officials. Citizens can enter an address and learn the name of every elected representative at each level of government for that location. The website also gives voters the opportunity to view the ballot before the election and provides a tutorial on the new voting system. Candidates can obtain information regarding filing deadlines. Additionally, the web site contains past election results and provides frequent updates during elections. The web site is located at [www.dupageelections.com](http://www.dupageelections.com).

## **Elections Administered by DuPage County Election Commission**

Election results must be certified within seven days of the election and submit those results to the Illinois State Board of Elections.

### During even numbered years:

General Primary: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday in March

§ Nominate Federal, State, Legislative, Judicial, County and Sanitary Officials

General Election: 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday after the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in November

§ Elect Federal, State, Legislative, Judicial, County and Sanitary Officials

### During odd numbered years:

Consolidated Primary: Last Tuesday in February

§ Nominate Municipal and Township Officials

Consolidated Election: 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in April

§ Elect Township, Municipal, Park District, Library District, School District, Community College District, and Fire District Officials

## **DuPage County Election Commission Questions or Complaints**

Questions or concerns regarding the administration of elections in DuPage County can be referred to the DuPage County Election Commission at (630) 407-5600 or the Illinois State Board of Elections. The Illinois State Board of Elections provides a toll-free number that allows voters to register complaints or access information regarding provisional voting, administrative complaint procedures, military and overseas voters, and other relevant election issues. The hotline is (866) 513-1121.

## **Funding the DuPage County Voting System**

DuPage County received \$4.4 million in Federal and State funds to purchase the new AccuVote voting system. The system was purchased in 2001 for \$4.4 million, with \$2.2 million from County funds and a \$2.2 million matching grant from the State. After Illinois received funds appropriated by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), the State distributed \$3,192.22 per precinct to each eligible election authority, based on the number of precincts in the jurisdiction at the time of the November 2000 election. In February 2004, DuPage County received \$2,288,821.74 in HAVA funds. The County was then reimbursed the original \$2.2 million that it had contributed to purchasing the AccuVote system. Ultimately, the entire cost of the new system was paid for by State and Federal grants.

## **DuPage County Election Commission Contact Information**

421 N. County Farm Rd. 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

Wheaton, IL

(630) 682-7440

[www.dupageelections.com](http://www.dupageelections.com)

Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Extended hours 8 weeks prior to any election, including Saturday 8:00 a.m. – 12noon

## **Help America Vote Act of 2002**

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 aims to improve the administration of federal elections in the United States. HAVA impacts almost every election because federal and state elections typically occur simultaneously. The legislation provided \$3.9 billion in federal funds to be distributed to states to replace outdated voting machines, improve voter education, train election judges, and improve access for persons with disabilities. HAVA created suggested and mandatory minimum standards states must follow in several areas of election administration. Election authorities must provide voters with information such as sample ballots, voting instructions, statement of voter rights, and procedures for registering complaints. Voters also must have the ability to cast a provisional ballot if their name does not appear on the voter rolls. Once registration is verified, the vote will count. Additionally, HAVA requires voting systems provide for “second chance voting” - the opportunity for voters to verify their selection and correct any errors before casting the ballot.

HAVA also provided federal funding to replace outdated voting equipment, such as punch cards and lever machines. Election authorities across the country have received federal and state funds to purchase new equipment, such as optical scan voting systems and electronic voting equipment. The DuPage County Election Commission received \$4.4 million in federal and state HAVA funds to purchase the new optical scan voting system.

## **Provisional Voting in DuPage County**

A voter has the right to cast a provisional ballot if the voter’s name does not appear on the official list of eligible voters, or if a voter’s voting status has been challenged. A provisional ballot is similar to a regular ballot, but the ballot is counted only if the voter’s registration is verified after the election. Illinois requires that a voter cast the provisional ballot in the correct precinct. After casting a provisional ballot, the election authority has two weeks to verify voter information and count the votes. In DuPage County, voters receiving a provisional ballot can visit the DuPage Election Commission website to ascertain whether their ballot was counted or not counted, including the reason the votes do not count.

## **DuPage County Optical Scan Voting Machines (AccuVote)**

DuPage County uses the AccuVote Optical Scan Voting System. Voters mark their choices on the ballot using a marker, typically a #2 pencil. After completing the ballot, the voter feeds the ballot into an AccuVote Tabulator, which scans and tallies the votes cast. The machine notifies the voter if there is a problem with the ballot, such as an over vote (choosing more than one candidate in a contest) or an under vote (failing to make a selection in a contest). The voter then has the option of correcting the ballot or overriding the vote, in which case the vote will not count. A voter choosing to correct the ballot must request a new ballot from an election judge. The ballots are preserved in a ballot box located underneath the AccuVote Tabulator. Ballots are used if a recount is necessary, and serve as paper record of all votes cast. After the polls close, votes are tallied at each precinct and transmitted to the Election Commission. Results are either transmitted via modem or the Tabulator’s memory card is read by a central computer when the equipment is returned.

Optical scan voting machines are considered safe and do not pose many security concerns. Most run on batteries or have an electrical cord and a battery backup. The paper ballot serves as a safeguard in case of computer malfunction. However, precinct count optical scan voting machines that transmit election results to a central counting location via modem have been subject

to criticism because of the increased risk of tampering. Approximately 50% of precincts report final results to the DuPage County Election Commission via modem.

## **Qualifications and Registering to Vote**

In order to register to vote, a person must be a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years of age by Election Day, and must be a resident of Illinois for at least 30 days. Voters registered in Illinois cannot claim the right to vote in any other state. Additionally, persons convicted and in jail or prison cannot register or vote during the duration of their sentence. Illinois citizens must register to vote in person or by mail and must register at least 28 days prior to an election in order to vote in that election. DuPage County residents can register in person at the DuPage Election Commission, city and village offices, and military recruitment offices. Registration is also available at some public libraries, schools, labor groups, civic groups, and some corporations. Illinois participates in the Motor Voter Program and allows citizens to register to vote when applying for a driver's license or state identification card at Secretary of State facilities. When registering in person or with a deputy registrar, the citizen must provide two forms of identification, and one form must have a current address.

Illinois residents can also register by mail. The Illinois State Board of Elections provides a mail-in application for statewide use. The form is available online, at any government office, or can be obtained by calling any election authority. Citizens registering by mail must send a copy of a current, valid photo identification or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows name and address. Registration applications without this information will be processed, however, the voter will be required to show photo identification when voting for the first time. A citizen will receive a voter identification card 2-3 weeks after the election authority receives the form.

## **Where to Vote**

Illinois law requires that all voters cast ballots in their assigned precinct. Prior to elections, the DuPage County Board of Elections mails postcards to all registered voters with the location of the precinct where they must vote. Precinct locations are also available on the website, and voters can contact the Election Commission for further information.

## **Obtaining and Absentee Ballot**

Voters unable to vote in person must complete an absentee ballot application. Applications are available at any voter registration location and on the DuPage County Election Board website. An absentee ballot can be requested not more than 40 or less than 5 days prior to an election. Ballots are mailed upon receipt of the completed application once the ballot is finalized. Voted ballots must be returned to the Election Commission office no later than 12:00 Noon on Election Day. A first-time voter who registered by mail cannot vote by absentee ballot.

Members of the military and US citizens temporarily residing outside the U.S. may submit an application to receive absentee ballots for all elections in that calendar year. The application, called a federal post card application, is available on the DuPage County Election Commission website. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) provides information to U.S. citizens covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). The FVAP website is located at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

## **Changing Residence**

Illinois law requires voters vote in their precinct. Registered voters moving prior to an election must transfer their registration. If a registered voter moves to a different address in the same precinct within 27 days of the election, the voter can vote a full ballot after signing an affidavit. If a registered voter moves within the county more than 30 days before an election and does not transfer registration, the voter can vote for federal offices only once the voter completes an address correction form at their former polling place. A registered voter cannot vote if they move out of their current county more than 30 days before the election and do not transfer registration.

## **Election Judges and Election Workers in DuPage County**

Election authorities need competent and well-trained citizens to serve as election judges and workers. Election judges and workers are critically important to the success or failure of any election. They serve on the frontline of the voting process and have a variety of responsibilities and duties on Election Day. Election judges are officers of the Circuit Court and are responsible for the proper and lawful conduct of elections. Election judges protect the integrity of the voting process. Their many duties include verifying persons registered to vote, distributing ballots, assisting voters with disabilities or non-English speaking voters, and answering voter questions. Election workers assist in a variety of ways, including serving as check-in clerks on Election night, field representatives communicating between the Election Commission and the polling places, absentee ballot drivers, and general polling place assistants. Serving as an election judge or worker helps ensure that our electoral system functions properly, and it provides citizens with the opportunity to view democracy in action. However, it is also an exhausting experience — you must be at your designated location by 5:30 a.m. and typically work until 9:00 p.m. In return for service, election judges receive a maximum stipend of \$90. Election judges receive a check from the County, however, the Illinois State Board of Elections actually pays for election judges.

DuPage County needs more than 3,500 election judges on Election Day to serve the 730 precincts within the county. Residents of DuPage County interested in serving as an election judge or election worker should contact the DuPage County Election Commission at 630/407-5600. If you are not a DuPage County resident, contact your county clerk.

## **Qualifications to Serve as an Election Judge or Worker**

The requirements for serving as an election judge are set forth in the Illinois Election Code. A citizen interested in serving as an election judge must: be a United States citizen registered to vote in DuPage County; be of good repute and character; be able to speak, read and write the English language; be skilled in arithmetic (addition, subtraction, division and multiplication); be of good understanding and capable; not be a candidate for any office at the election; and not be an elected committeemen. Citizens meeting the minimum qualifications can be appointed an election judge for a two-year period once they complete required training courses and passes a written examination. There are no specific requirements to serve as an election worker. High school students may serve as student workers on Election Night. No formal screening process or resume requirement precludes service as an election judge or election worker. The names of election judges are available to the public and citizens can contest the appointment of an election judge, however, this rarely occurs.

## **Election Judge Training**

Illinois law requires that election judges complete a minimum of four hours of training and pass a written examination. Prior to every election, the DuPage County Election Commission provides the required training courses and a variety of “refresher” courses for returning election judges. Judges can receive additional compensation for each election once they complete training courses. All election judges in DuPage County have equal authority and each receive training on the basic administration of elections, election law, how to use the Accu-Vote optical scan voting system, and provisional voting. Some counties in Illinois provide specialized training and designate technical judges. Designating technical judges can reduce election judge error, increase productivity, provide specialized assistance to disabled or visually impaired voters, and address citizen questions and concerns. Across the country, counties using electronic voting have implemented technical judge training programs.

## **Voting Accessibility for Elderly, Disabled, and Visually Impaired**

Federal and State laws require election authorities to provide elderly, disabled and visually impaired voters with full access to registration and voting. Federal laws, such as the American with Disabilities Act and the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act, benefit the elderly, persons with disabilities or visual impairments by requiring improved access to registration facilities and polling places for federal elections. The Help America Vote Act of 2002 improves access to voting, however, many of the relevant provisions have not been fully implemented.

Election authorities must provide access to polling places and the ballot for all registered voters. Federal and State laws require authorities provide certain aids, such as voting instructions printed in large type, a magnifying lens to place over booklets, large type sample ballots, and information by telecommunications devices for the deaf. Election authorities must ensure that polling places are accessible to all voters. An accessible polling place is one which allows entrance to polling place facilities by voters with handicaps, and which meets specific criteria for walkways, parking, doorways, path of travel, ramps, and elevators. If a polling place is inaccessible, a voter can request, in advance, to be assigned to an accessible polling place or be provided with an alternative means for casting a ballot on the day of the election. Voters may have help in marking ballots if needed due to any physical impairment, blindness, or inability to read, write, or speak proficient English. Visually impaired voters have the option of voting at the polls or by absentee ballot. Two election judges, each of a different party, can assist voters with disabilities if necessary. Voters have a right to choose any person except an employer or union representative to assist them in completing a ballot. The voter is required to state under oath the nature of the impairment that causes them to seek help.

The DuPage County Election Commission has several programs to assist elderly and disabled voters unable to go to their designated polling places. Elderly and disabled voters can request an absentee ballot from the Election Commission. Persons unable to personally complete the absentee application and/or the ballot may have someone assist. Persons assisting are required to complete an affidavit. The Election Commission has established programs with local nursing homes. On the Saturday prior to an election, Election Judges visit local nursing homes and oversee the voting process. Additionally, persons hospitalized not more than five days prior to the election who are unable to vote in person are entitled to have a ballot brought to the hospital. The voter hospitalized must request a hospital ballot from the Election Commission, accompanied by a certificate completed by the attending physician. The request and the ballot itself may be delivered

by any relative, or by any other person registered to vote in the hospitalized person's home precinct.

## **About The Citizen Advocacy Center**

The Citizen Advocacy Center is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to building democracy for the 21st Century by strengthening the public's capacities, resources, and institutions for self-government. If you are interested in more information, becoming a volunteer, or making a tax-deductible contribution to the Center, please feel free to contact us at:

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