



**GEORGE L. CHRISTENSON**  
MILWAUKEE COUNTY CLERK

Date: June 16, 2020  
To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, County Board of Supervisors  
From: George L. Christenson, County Clerk  
Re: From the Director, Election Commission, requesting to abolish one (1.0) FTE Election Support Specialist and create one (1.0) FTE Deputy Director in the Election Commission to assume several high-level duties and provide needed relief to the Elections Director

The spring 2020 Presidential Primary election in Wisconsin was unprecedented and tested the election infrastructure in Milwaukee County and beyond. Despite overwhelming challenges, Milwaukee County Election Commission (MCEC) staff responded admirably and carried out a successful election.

The MCEC currently consists of:

- Elections Director (1)
- Elections Coordinator (1)
- Election Support Specialist (1)
- Temporary/Seasonal Election Clerk (11)

During the spring election, the MCEC experienced significant staffing shortages due to COVID-19. There was an instance of a Covid-19 infection among the staff. Staffing was further impacted by retirement as well as lack of employees' availability to work due to being in the high-risk population category. In addition, 5 Election Clerks were unwilling to work due to health concerns. Despite being a high at-risk individual, the Elections Director performed her job duties, logging 70+ hours a week in March and the first week of April.

Once the spring election was certified, the County Clerk and Elections Director assessed the process to identify best practices and opportunities for improvement. Thus far, this has involved discussions with MCEC staff and Municipal Clerks to share experiences, best practices or found solutions as to how election officials met and overcame those challenges, discussed ideas, resources, approaches and partnership opportunities to be prepared for the fall 2020 contests.

Elections allow for no errors or delays. This requires sufficient staffing with professional public servants. The CDC and health officials are predicting a "second wave" of COVID-19 in the Fall. Therefore, we all must be prepared for this worst-case scenario by fortifying our infrastructure now. This will be accomplished by restructuring existing MCEC staffing and operations to adjust for the new normal that is brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic as follows:

- File 20-498: Creation of a full-time Deputy Elections Director position (DED). The DED would serve as back up to the Elections Director. This individual will be able to carry out the duties of the Elections Director in her absence and assume several high-level duties. This would not only allow

for unprecedented circumstances that may render the Elections Director unavailable, but it would provide much needed relief to Elections Director who has put her own health at risk. This create would be accomplished by promoting the individual currently serving in the Election Support Specialist (ESS) position to the vacant Elections Coordinator (EC) position and then abolishing the Election Support Specialist (ESS) position. The accompanying fiscal note explains the fiscal impact of this restructuring.

- File 20-499: Creation of one (1) Administrative Assistant position (AA). The AA will ensure constant in-person staffing during open hours, assume duties such as reviewing and verifying post-election documents for the 19 municipalities and checking campaign finance reports for omissions and completeness, and provide administrative assistance to the Director, Deputy Director and other staff. This position creation will be accomplished by utilizing funds (\$19,118) from the general fund intended for hiring Temporary Election Clerks during the election cycle and therefore result in no budget increase for the EC. The position will perform the duties of a Temporary Election Clerk during the election cycle. The accompanying fiscal note explains the fiscal impact of this restructuring.

In conclusion, we believe that this plan employs best practices, utilizes lessons learned from April 2020 election and it is the best way forward to ensure that the balance of elections in 2020 are conducted safely, accurately, and in compliance with all applicable State Statutes. The urgency of executing this plan cannot be overstated as the preparations for August Primary are in full swing and therefore we hope that the necessary approvals will move expeditiously.