



**King County**

**King County  
Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee**

**Annual Report**

**For the Year 2018**

February 2019

## King County Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee

<b>Member</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Ellen Hansen, Chair	Registered Voters, King County
Marilyn Knight, Vice Chair	League of Women Voters of Seattle
Bruce Huang	Chinese-speaking community
Sheryl Moss	Office of Secretary of State
Frank Radford	Registered voters, King County
Linh Thai	Vietnamese-speaking community
Monica Tracey	King County Republican Party
Emily Willoughby	King County Democratic Party

# **Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee Annual Report for the Year 2018**

## **Introduction**

Ordinance 15453, which was passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on May 6, 2006, reestablished the Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee (CEOC). The ordinance also established its original mission: "...to help King County restore and maintain public confidence in elections."<sup>1</sup> The ordinance further directs the CEOC to make recommendations to the Council to:

- "Improve performance of the King County elections division" and
- "Help ensure that accountability and performance of the elections division is provided in a transparent manner that is meaningful to the residents of King County."

This report is submitted pursuant to Ordinance 15453, Section 5.B.5, which requires annual reports to the Council. The report focuses on the most important activities of the CEOC and of King County Elections. The committee would be happy to provide more detail to Councilmembers if desired.

## **Overview**

During 2018, the King County Department of Elections successfully administered and certified two special elections (February and April), a primary in August, and the November 8 general election with complete ballot reconciliation. After each election, the Department publishes reports, including the results for each election, on its website, <http://www.kingcounty.gov/elections/>. In addition, the Director of Elections reports on current operations to CEOC members at the committee's regular meetings.

The voter turnout rate for the general election was 76 percent, far above the prediction of 60 percent, and 981,439 ballots were returned.

## **Critical Business Decisions**

In May, the King County Council approved King County Elections request for funding, to provide postage-paid return envelopes for all elections. King County's example was quickly followed by all other counties, showing that King County once again led the way in election innovation.

### Improving Voter Access

Once again, Elections partnered with the Seattle Foundation to provide \$460,000 to 33 community organizations to work in diverse communities to remove barriers to voting.

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<sup>1</sup> This ordinance was updated in 2018, eliminating the term "restore."

Elections also worked with Lyft to offer 50% discount rides to drop boxes on Election Day.

This report describes: (1) the activities of the CEOC, (2) the role of the CEOC, and issues on which the CEOC was a resource to the department or the director.

## **CEOC Activities**

The CEOC has participated in a number of activities that have been valuable to the King County Council, the Department of Elections and the residents of King County.

### **1. Election observations.**

- a. CEOC members continued to observe all aspects of ballot processing – including Logic and Accuracy tests, signature checking, separation of ballot envelopes and ballots, preparation and tabulation.
- b. CEOC members continued to visit ballot drop boxes to observe signage, traffic flow, and voter activity. The CEOC observed each special election as well as the primary and general elections. CEOC observations were discussed in post-election debriefs with the director of Elections so that CEOC observations and any suggestions for improvements could be considered by the director. Elections continued to incorporate several of the CEOC’s suggestions into their procedures, and the CEOC considers observing elections one of its primary duties.

**2. Ballot drop box state mandate.** In 2017, the state legislature passed Substitute Senate Bill 5472, which required counties to provide, at a minimum, one ballot drop box per fifteen thousand registered voters in the county and a minimum of one ballot drop box in each city, town, and census-designated place in the county with a post office. Elections is now required to operate a total of 86 ballot drop boxes. Prior to the new state law, Elections operated 43 ballot drop boxes. Elections’ plan was to deploy the additional ballot drop boxes in phases. In 2018, there were 66 drop boxes in King County.

**3. CEOC role and membership.** The CEOC convened a subcommittee in 2017 to review the CEOC’s history, duties, charter and membership. The subcommittee completed its work in 2018 after exploring options to increase diversity in its membership that would make it more reflective of King County residents. The CEOC met with several members of the King County Council to discuss their proposal and the Council passed that proposal, incorporated in Ordinance 18795 on September 24, 2018.

## **CEOC Served as a Resource**

CEOC members serve as liaisons between members of the public, King County Elections and the County Council. Members are frequently approached by friends, neighbors, colleagues, community groups and others with elections questions. CEOC members are

visible at many ballot drop box closings and voters frequently ask them who they are. With their CEOC badge in hand, members explain that they are part of a group appointed by the Council to observe the election process. Invariably this receives a positive response. Through these interactions and conversations members of the public gain a better understanding of elections administration, rules and laws, which benefits everyone.

## **Conclusion**

CEOC members are proud of the role they played during 2018 helping to ensure fair, accessible, and accountable elections in King County. Members look forward to working with Elections staff and the Council to continue to improve elections during 2019 and to make our committee more diverse.