



**King County
Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee**

**Annual Report
For the Year 2024**

Feb 1, 2025

King County Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee Membership

Member	Representing
Eliseo J. Juárez	Chair, Spanish-Speaking Community
Christopher Hays	Vice Chair, Registered Voter
Mathew Patrick Thomas	Vice Chair, King County Republican Party
Hillary De La Cruz	Registered Voter
Hanna Floss	King County Democratic Party
Tyson Hartman	Technology
Stuart Holmes	Washington State Office of Secretary of State
Julie Kang	Korean-Speaking Community
Kathy Sakahara	League of Women Voters
Mike Flood	Municipal League of King County
Dr. Jason Lambacher	University of Washington Bothell
Stanley Tsao	Chinese-Speaking Community
Matthew Vinci	Jurisdictional
Carolyn Stevens	Disability Community
VACANT	Vietnamese-Speaking Community
VACANT	One representative from a nonpartisan organization in King County that promotes equality and the advancement of Black or African Americans, such as the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle

NOTE: CEOC Member Mathew Vinci stepped down from CEOC effective December 1, 2024 as he moved out of King County.

Introduction

Authorized in King County Code Section 2.53, the Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee (CEOC) is dedicated to helping Martin Luther King Jr. County maintain public confidence in elections. Per the King County Code, the CEOC makes recommendations to the King County Council to:

- Improve performance of the Department of Elections; and
- Help ensure that accountability and performance of the Department of Elections is provided in a transparent manner that is meaningful to the residents of King County.

As mentioned in the 2021 and 2022 CEOC Annual Reports, the CEOC and its members serve the public and the King County Council (hereafter referred to as KCC or Council) by making recommendations and reporting to the Council to maintain public confidence. The CEOC also serves as an important source of guidance and information for King County Council. As such, this report is submitted pursuant to King County Code 2.53.041.5, which requires the CEOC to submit an annual report to the Council on its "observations, findings and recommendations regarding the special, primary, and general elections."

Committee Highlights

The CEOC met 6 times and had one learning retreat in 2024, exceeding the requirement specified in the ordinance that established the committee and provided observers at most elections held in King County during the year. Additionally, workgroups of the CEOC convened an additional 25 times with members conducting issue specific work. As in 2023, the CEOC adopted a meeting schedule that was primarily virtual and compliant with the Open Public Meetings Act. The CEOC continued its commitment to virtual meeting format to increase public access and participation of CEOC members regardless of physical location. In-person meetings included a briefing from the Washington Secretary of State and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency on the measures the Federal Government is taking to classify the administration of elections as critical infrastructure to national security.

This briefing provided important insights into how the federal, state, and local governments along with King County coordinate to protect the integrity of elections. Additionally, this briefing brought the CEOC together to discuss how the use of artificial intelligence (AI) is influencing elections, and most troubling, accelerating the use of technology in vote suppression and voter misinformation campaigns. CEOC anticipates making the focus on AI and cybersecurity an ongoing priority for learning and guidance to King County Elections in this fast-moving threat to election administration.

This year CEOC changed our membership requirements to include the mandatory attendance of Elections Observation Trainings from KCE. Of the 14 members, 14 completed the training and several observed elections during the 2024 calendar year, including conducting observations at ballot box locations and at the Department of Elections facility in Renton.

Overall attendance and participation in CEOC meetings have increased and the engagement of members during regular meetings and separate workgroup convenings has proven a substantial improvement to the quality of our oversight of KCE but also to the confidence of members in their role serving King County.

The committee has once again increased member satisfaction, continuing a trend since 2022 with scores increasing for perceptions of meaningful work, and overall satisfaction. While election skepticism remains troubling at the national level, local confidence in elections seems to defy the national narratives.

As the Committee has stated in prior years, KCE simply remains more transparent and on the cutting edge of elections administration, leaving little room for misinformation and error.

When areas of improvement have arisen, CEOC was notified in a timely manner and Director Wise has made herself available for questions and accepted CEOC suggestions for improvement in each opportunity. This has not exclusively been at the request of CEOC to produce answers or explanations, it has often been the case that KCE proactively seeks time on CEOC agendas to educate and provide after-action style presentations on election anomalies and emergent issues. This is of great value to the citizens of the county. A proactive KCE is the most powerful tool we have in holding KCE to its own standards. CEOC is encouraged by the culture of disclosure of KCE in 2024.

As stated in the 2022 and 2023 reports the challenge of operating for so long without a member of the Vietnamese speaking community is troubling. The Vietnamese speaking representative is outlined in our charter and creative solutions to the length of time without this important seat filled may be needed by the Council.

Continued Focus on Public Confidence and Oversight

For 2024, the CEOC implemented a workplan that serves the Council, Department of Elections and public. The CEOC conducted the bulk of its work within its defined workgroups. These groups were led by CEOC Vice Chairs and focused into the following three sections:

- Election Monitoring, Vice Chair Mathew Patrick Thomas
- Best Practices, Vice Chair Christopher Hays
- Voter Participation, Vice Chair Jude Ahmed

In the latter half of 2024, the Voter Participation Work group was consolidated into the Best Practices workgroup after the departure of Vice Chair Ahmed. This provided an opportunity to align similar work areas within one workgroup moving forward. Bylaws were subsequently amended to reflect this change. The combined workgroup Chaired by Vice Chair Hays is now known as the Best Practices and Participation Workgroup.

The unedited reports of both the Election Monitoring and Best Practices Workgroup, and Voter Participation workgroups are available for your review at the end of this report.

Progress on 2023 CEOC Commitments and our new 2024 Commitments

Last year, the CEOC committed to undertake work related to four specific areas of concern. These commitments were specifically established to create greater public confidence in the work of the Elections Department and increase the amount of information available to King County residents about the work of King County Elections. Those commitments included:

Commitment #1 Increase CEOC members' election and Canvassing Board observing program.
Status: In Progress

Commitment #2 Restructuring CEOC reporting and bylaws to better inform Council and residents of the county of its work.
Status: Complete

Commitment #3 Creating an Election Excellence Dashboard for the Council to see how the performance of King County Elections compares to best and emerging practices across the country with related recommendations for the Council to consider.

Status: In Progress. CEOC is examining core areas of measurement on what areas of excellence constitute an Elections Department that has public confidence, operates with best practices, and is accountable to King County residents. The CEOC recognizes that the Department of Elections, Director Julie Wise, and her staff are nationally known leaders in election administration and excellence, the CEOC workgroups will identify core areas to highlight how King County Elections strives to achieve, meets, or exceeds these areas of excellence. This commitment is likely to be a perennial goal- worthy of the patience required to develop a thoughtful metric that respects the independence of the KCE Director, County Council, and the CEOC's oversight roles.

CEOC Recommendation to Council

The CEOC is formally recommending a change to the county code to increase public oversight of elections. In 2024 the Best Practices Workgroup proposed the following two changes for the King County Council's consideration:

1. Increasing threats and a more hostile political environment, especially towards election workers, staff, and officials, impacts every person's ability to have confidence in elections integrity. When election administrators are under threat so is our collective confidence in their ability to complete their job without fear and with accuracy. **The CEOC recommends that the King County Council explore methods to improve the protection of our election workers, staff, and officials from in-person and online assaults, harassment, and threats through county code, resources, and/or legislative agenda.** Specifically, the CEOC is interested in the Council passing ordinances and supporting legislation that enhances penalties for threats and acts of violence against election workers, attempting to or successfully disrupting the administration of elections, and other measures that disincentivize harm of elections officials, staff, and workers.

2. More than ever, the public is interested in the processes and procedures of election administrators as they conduct their work. With the additional knowledge of these processes come more opportunities for the public to help ensure accurate and fair elections by ensuring their rights, agency policy, and the law is followed. This is only possible when the public has clear and easily navigable ways to file complaints when they perceive their rights to be violated. **The CEOC recommends the King County Council advise King County Elections to develop educational materials for the public about the policies and procedures for handling and processing election related complaints, including information on how a voter can submit a complaint and available remedies when appropriate.** The workgroup believes that providing these educational materials will create increased transparency for the public and clarify procedures remedies and investigations. The CEOC believes this is an important part of free and fair elections.
3. As new threats to election integrity emerge and the speed of those threats accelerate, KCE would benefit from additional resources in the near-term to address immediate threats to both election administration processes and public confidence. **CEOC recommends to the King County Council a task force to investigate and propose an investment plan to boost funding in two important areas within King County Elections:**
 - Cybersecurity and technology infrastructure to better defend against increasing digital threats, enhance accessibility, and new methods of secure online voting.
 - Increase resources for the voter education fund to enhance language access and election education.

CEOC Recommendation to King County Elections Director

The CEOC is formally recommending a change to the county code to increase public oversight of elections. In 2024 the Best Practices Workgroup offers the following advice for the King County Elections Director for consideration:

1. The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), of 2002 was passed by Congress to make sweeping reforms to the nation's voting process. HAVA addresses improvements to voting systems and voter access that were identified following the 2000 election. The CEOC recommends King County Elections, at minimum, produce and make available educational materials related to the implementation of and compliance with HAVA in King County. This would include disclosure of how federal dollars are being applied in King County related to HAVA and what specific rights are guaranteed to voters in King County. The CEOC is particularly encouraged by other counties that have provided their compliance with HAVA on their website, including but not limited to Kings County, NY, and Los Angeles County, CA. CEOC recommends this information be clear, in plain language, and available in multiple languages on its website.
2. Additionally, the CEOC recommends the KCE Director charter and maintain a committee comprised of citizens and staff to provide guidance specifically for the education pages in

the voter pamphlet and provide input on voter pamphlets' standard format options, guidelines, and mediums.

Conclusion

The CEOC plays a unique and important role in King County and Washington state. A rarity amongst counties in Washington, the CEOC is the only local body of its kind statewide. The partnership between CEOC, Director Wise and the Department of Elections cannot be overstated. The cooperation and spirit of transparency between the Department and CEOC makes oversight possible. King County Elections has been responsive to every request for time, documents, and collaboration.

The CEOC wishes to express its deep appreciation for the partnership offered by Director Wise, the work of the intrepid public servants of the Elections Department, and the expert Council staff supporting CEOC operations. As stated in our previous reports, King County is well served by its award winning, and nationally acclaimed Elections Department under the leadership of Director Wise. We are confident in its operations and have full faith in the validity of King County Elections to be accurate, fair, and true.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve our communities.

In Service,

Eliseo J. Juárez
Chair