

LWV Mc Lean Co. Election Study Group: Consensus Questions

Currently McLean County has two election authorities: the **City of Bloomington Board of Elections Commission (BEC)** for the city of Bloomington only; and the **County Clerk's Office (CC)** for the rest of the county, including the town of Normal. By Illinois state statute, the law that established BEC must be "rejected" before a single election authority for McLean County can be established. If there is League consensus that a single election authority is desirable, there are two different ways (ILCS Article 6A). The first step in both cases is to reject the law establishing BEC by a Bloomington city referendum. Then without any further action and no additional referendum, CC will take over all the business of BEC. If the referendum to reject the law establishing BEC passes, it is also possible to establish a **County Election Commission (CEC)**. A CEC requires either a vote by the County Board; or the passing of an additional referendum in McLean County for that purpose. If a CEC were established, our County would still have an elected County Clerk and CC would retain all of its other duties (such as taxes and records).

CONSENSUS QUESTION #1: Should the law establishing the City of Bloomington Board of Elections Commission (BEC) be rejected so that McLean County, including the city of Bloomington, will from that time forward have one single election authority for all its citizens?

Pro: This would end confusion for voters as to where to go to register or write to for an absentee ballot; and eliminate delays for processing address changes within our county. The current system of two election authorities is wasteful and inefficient. Consolidating would be much cheaper, as shown by the big savings in Sangamon County after consolidation.

Con: Bloomington likes its election authority and won't vote for abolishing it. Voters can easily check registration status before elections to avoid problems at the polls. There are some transitions costs, and there is no guarantee that our savings would be as great as Sangamon County's.

CONSENSUS QUESTION #2: Provided the referendum rejecting the law that established BEC passes, should a McLean County Election Commission be established in lieu of the McLean County Clerk's Office (CC) becoming the election authority?

Pro: In CC, but not at BEC, there have problems with election judge training as well as major delays for voters on elections days and in processing voter registrations or address changes. The others jobs performed at CC (taxes, records) detract from time and expertise required for election issues. While a sitting County Clerk must campaign every four years for office while serving as supervisor of elections (a potential conflict of interest), he or she can also be elected without having any expertise relevant to running elections. By contrast, the administrator who heads a CEC would have to present relevant credentials and be hired by the Election Commissioners (2 Republicans and 1 Democrat), who are appointed by the County Board Chairman. The cost benefit for a CEC would about as great as consolidation in CC.

Con: Being able to elect the person in charge of elections safeguards the voters' right to choose; appointed officials are not as responsive to voter pressure. Nationwide, every election authority has a small percentage of voters who have registration problems. CC may be a little understaffed, and addressing that issue could to improve its performance. County Clerks all over Illinois supervise elections where they also run for office and those counties seem to think this system works fine. The League of Women Voters has always been against adding extra governmental bodies; the CC plus a CEC would increase the number of McLean County governmental agencies. More savings are to be had by consolidating under CC than by moving to a CEC (salaries for a CEC Executive Director and Election Commissioners would not be needed). On the other hand, if we went for a CEC there would still be a County Clerk with the same salary as now.