DALLAS COUNTY
OFFICE OF BUDGET AND EVALUATION

August 10, 2026

TO: Commissioners Court
County Administration

THROUGH: Dr. Ronica Watkins, Budget Officer

FROM: Nathaniel Dears, Budget and Policy Analyst

SUBJECT: FY2027 Proposed Budget for the Dallas County Election's department

BACKGROUND

As of June 2026, the Elections Contract Operations (1215) cost center has incurred expenditures of approximately $14,837,191, representing 114% of the current FY2026 budget of $13,284,993. Expenditure has exceeded the adopted budget due to several significant operational factors that occurred during the first half of the fiscal year.

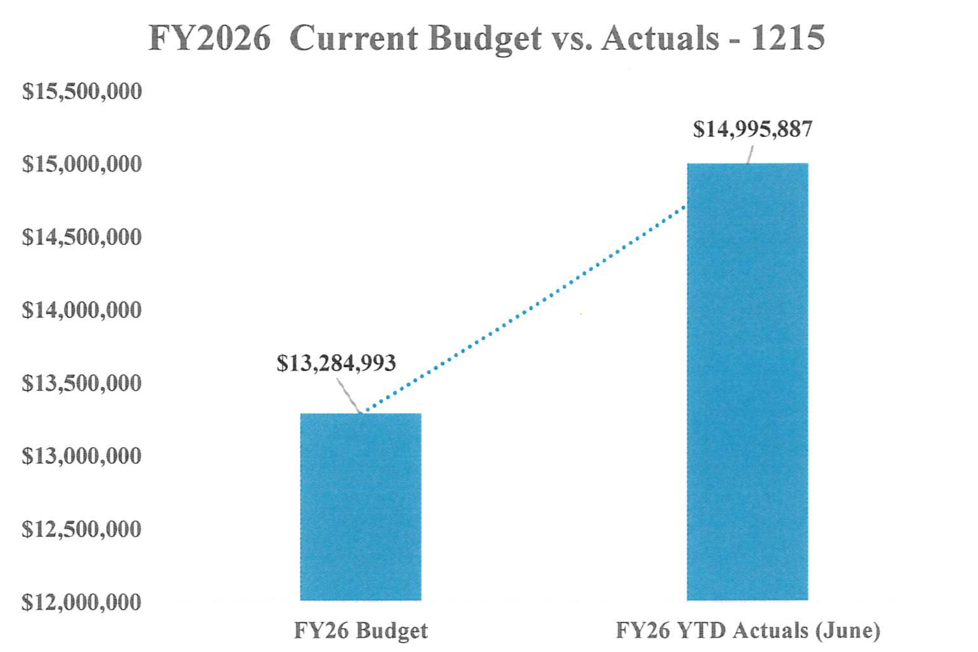
A major driver of increased costs was the administration of the March 2026 Primary Election and subsequent runoff elections. Unlike prior election cycles, the Democratic and Republican parties elected to conduct separate by-precinct elections rather than utilizing a joint election process. This operational change substantially increased the resources required to administer the elections. Additional staffing, expanded poll worker training, increased equipment deployment, and elevated overtime and temporary staffing expenditures were necessary to support election preparation, Election Day operations, and post-election activities. These demands continued through the primary runoff period and accelerated expenditures beyond anticipated levels.

In addition, the Elections Department administered an unplanned special election in December 2025 for the City of Grand Prairie following a vacancy created by a council member's election to the Texas House of Representatives. Because this special election was not included in the FY2026 budget, the department incurred additional costs related to staffing, election equipment, polling locations, and operational support.

Based on current expenditure trends, the Office of Budget and Evaluation projected that the Elections Contract Operations (1215) cost center would exceed its current FY2026 budget by more than $3 million. The projected deficit is primarily attributable to increased election complexity, elevated labor and training costs, implementation demands associated with the precinct-based election system, and unanticipated election activity occurring early in the fiscal year.

While overtime and temporary staffing expenditures are expected to stabilize following the completion of major election activities, the Elections Department will continue to closely monitor expenditures throughout the remainder of FY2026. However, due to the magnitude of the projected shortfall, the Office of Budget and Evaluation transferred $3,000,000 from Reserves and Contingency to address the projected budget deficit and ensure the continued delivery of required election services.

Cost Center	FY26 Current Budget	FY26 YTD Actuals (July)
*1215	$13,284,993	$14,995,887



*Cost Center 1215 was created in FY2026 to better track the election contract operations. Actuals are provided by Oracle Fusion.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Staffing Challenges:** Increased personnel costs are associated with recruiting and compensating election judges and clerks to support Early Voting operations. In addition, there was a pay rate increase for poll workers, resulting in an estimated additional cost of $150,000 (Court Order 2026-0828).

- **Polling Locations:** The expansion of polling locations has increased projected operating costs and created a greater need for staffing to ensure efficient election operations.

- **Operations:** Expenses for election vendor support services, transportation, and election equipment are projected to increase in FY2026 due to the implementation of the precinct-based election structure.

- **Tax Rate Election (TRE):** Commissioners Court approved a notice of a public hearing to consider proposing a new tax rate that may exceed the Voter-Approval Rate (VAR), thereby triggering a Tax Rate Election (TRE). While there is no additional cost associated with conducting the TRE, the Elections Department will be responsible for administering the election and overseeing its operations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Elections Department reported that there are fewer elections planned for FY2027 and is projected not to exceed the FY2026 current budget. It is recommended that the FY2027 Proposed Budget for the Elections Contract Operations, for $13,284,993, be approved as submitted.