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May 9, 2022

To: The Members of the Finance Committee *via email*

Re: Item 22-2825, Proposed Ordinance on Salaries of Elected County Officials

Dear Chair Daley and Commissioners:

The League of Women Voters of Cook County generally supports increasing the salaries of the Elected Officials. **However, we oppose the inclusion of the sentence in the Proposed Substitute which provides that the salaries would continue to automatically be adjusted after 2026 (or, in the case of the Clerk of the Court, after 2028).** We also have some questions as to what you are trying to achieve and whether this Proposed Substitute will accomplish that. *See the attached chart.* We also have concerns about whether there will be sufficient notice to the public of what is proposed in this Item to allow them a reasonable opportunity to provide input.

General support for increasing the salaries:

The salaries of the Elected Officials have not been increased since 2002 (2004 for the Clerk of the Court). The study led by Deloitte of what were deemed peer officials in other Counties found that, with one exception (the Board of Review), the salaries of the Cook County Officials were below the 50th percentile. In the cases of the Sheriff, Assessor, Clerk of the Court, Clerk, and Treasurer, their salaries were less than the 25th percentile.

The League generally supports increasing the salaries. We want elected officials to have reasonable salaries. We believe they will result in more and better candidates running for these offices. An elected official doing a full-time job should be able to live reasonably comfortably on the salaries paid.

Opposition to perpetual automatic increases

The Proposed Substitute posted on May 5 contains a chart showing the proposed salaries for FY 2023 (FY 2025 for the Clerk of the Court), reflecting 10% increases for all. This chart also shows that such salaries would be increased by the lower of 3% or the CPI for FY 2024, 2025, and 2026 (FY 2026, 2027, and 2028 for the Clerk of the Court).

However, the last sentence of the first "Be It Further Ordained" clause states:

The annual increase shall continue until the Cook County Board of Commissioners votes to repeal or amend the annual increase.

We understand this to mean that the salaries would continue to be adjusted each year beyond the next 4-year terms for each office. **We oppose the lack of transparency resulting from having automatic increases without the need for an affirmative vote for such increases.**

Any salary increase should be the result of an affirmative vote by the Board. At some point, and sooner rather than later in several cases, the automatic increase could result in the salaries of at least some of the elected officials being above “market rates” (looking at the 50th percentile salaries) for similarly situated elected offices.

The League urges the deletion of the sentence quoted above from the proposed Substitute. Instead, the Board should consider looking at the salaries every 4 years to determine whether any further increases are appropriate for some or all of the elected offices and, if so, take a vote on further increases without automatic increases beyond the next 4-year terms. Cook County residents deserve to know what the actual increases are and who has voted for them.

Further concerns about transparency

The League applauds the Board for normally being among the most transparent of governments. Proposed legislation and other items are posted as part of Board agendas and often referred to appropriate Committees, which generally consider the items the following month. When this item was posted on the Board’s April meeting agenda, there were blanks for the dollar amounts and how adjustments would be made during the next 4-year terms. Thus, the public has not had the normal notice as to what is being proposed and given the normal amount of time to provide comment to the Commissioners.

We urge you to provide the public with more notice of what is being proposed by calling for a special meeting of the Board later in the month to deal with this item, rather than taking a vote at the Finance Committee meeting on May 11.

Yours truly,

Cynthia Schilsky, President

attach.: Chart

Salaries over next 4 years, assuming no less than a 3% yearly increase:**Deloitte Numbers**

	<u>Current</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>Total \$\$</u>	<u>Cur Perc.</u>	<u>50th Percentile</u>	
Sheriff	160,000	176,000	181,280	186,718	192,320	32,320	20 th	195,302	
Clerk	105,000	115,500	118,965	122,534	126,210	21,210	8 th	151,930	
Treasurer	Same as Clerk							7 th	160,477
Board	85,000	93,500	96,395	99,194	102,170	17,170	39 th	112,830	
Finance Chair	90,000	99,000	101,970	105,029	108,180	18,180	-----	-----	
President	170,000	187,000	192,610	198,388	204,340	34,340	40 th	183,730	
Bd of Review	100,000	110,000	113,300	116,699	120,200	20,200	-----	-----	
Assessor	125,000	137,500	141,625	145,874	150,250	25,250	8 th	182,881	
Clerk of Court	<u>Current</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026</u>	<u>2027</u>	<u>2028</u>	<u>Total \$\$</u>	<u>Cur Perc.</u>	<u>50th Percentile</u>	
	105,000	115,500	118,965	122,534	126,210	21,210	21 st	161,816	

Questions:

1. Should the Clerk of the Court's Salary be raised to equal the same salary as the Clerk and Treasurer in 2025 and 2026?
2. Which of these positions are considered part-time? If none, will there be any prohibition or limitation on outside work? If some are part-time, are the levels appropriate?
4. Are the differences among the current salaries appropriate? Note that the dollar amount difference among the salaries increase over time since using a percentage increase. Will the differences among the salaries in future years be appropriate?
5. What month will be used to compare the change in the CPI from year to year?
6. What happens if the salaries go above the 50th percentile as compared to other jurisdictions?

Prepared by the League of Women Voters of Cook County re: Item 22-2825, May, 2022