



MUNICIPAL MONEY MATTERS

PHILADELPHIA CITY CONTROLLER CHRISTY BRADY

October 2025

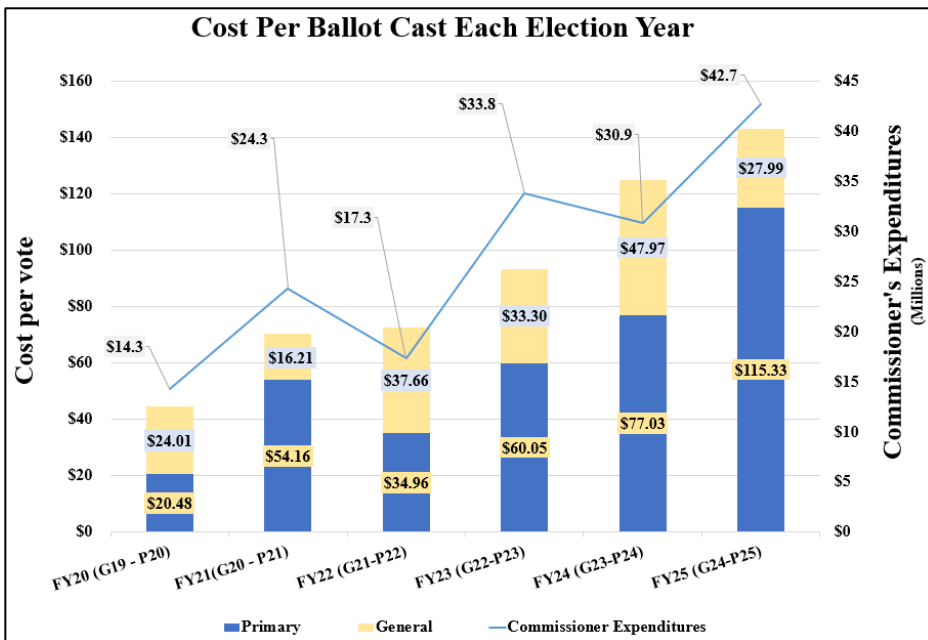
Cost of Counting Every Vote

The Philadelphia City Commissioner's office is responsible for overseeing all elections operations and voter registration operations. The office relies on its annual budget approved by City Council to dedicate the necessary resources to serve more than one million registered voters.

In FY2025, the City Commissioners' expenditures totaled \$40.7 million. Along with overseeing at least two elections per year, the Commissioner's office incurs expenditures associated with voter outreach, multilingual materials, managing early voting centers, secure drop boxes, satellite offices and many other programs throughout the year that support Philadelphia's elections process. During the May 2025 municipal primary election, 176,560 ballots were cast, recording a 16.6% voter turnout rate. Based on the office's annual budget, it cost \$115.33 per vote in the latest primary election.

While Presidential election years draw the most participation, local primaries attract the fewest voters, driving up the cost per vote.

In the 2020 and 2024 General Elections, when voter turnout exceeded 65%, the cost was about \$16–\$28 per vote cast. By contrast, municipal primary elections with voter turnout under 28% saw costs climb dramatically, with elections typically exceeding \$50–\$115 per ballot.



Fiscal Year	Election Cycle	Registered Voters	Turnout %
FY 20	General 2019	1,062,608	28.0%
	Primary 2020	1,076,629	32.4%
FY21	General 2020	1,129,308	66.4%
	Primary 2021	1,053,565	21.3%
FY22	General 2021	1,050,042	21.9%
	Primary 2022	1,048,790	23.6%
FY23	General 2022	1,072,129	47.4%
	Primary 2023	1,025,354	27.5%
FY24	General 2023	1,033,320	31.2%
	Primary 2024	1,037,671	19.4%
FY25	General 2024	1,117,680	65.1%
	Primary 2025	1,062,864	16.6%

Note: The cost per vote is estimated by dividing half the City Commissioners' annual expenditures by the number of ballots cast in each election (primary or general). Costs may reflect spending that can span fiscal years and include special elections. Larger elections, like Presidential elections, typically cost more. One-time expenses, such as voting machines and grant-funded COVID-related expenses, are not separately accounted for in this analysis.

