



King County

**King County
Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee
CEOC**

**Annual Report
For the Year 2025**

Feb 1, 2026

King County Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee
Membership

| Member | Representing |
|-----------------------|---|
| Christopher Hays | 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 |
| LeAnn Blanco | Jurisdictional |
| Tasha Mae | Advocacy Queen |
| John Rodriguez | Spanish-Speaking Community |
| VACANT | Vietnamese-Speaking Community |
| VACANT | Representative from the disability community |

Introduction

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

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

As mentioned in the 2023 and 2024 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 and trust within our election systems. The CEOC also serves as an important source of guidance and information for the 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 held five meetings, including one in-person session in 2025, fulfilling the requirement specified in the ordinance that establishes the CEOC body. Additionally, workgroups of the CEOC met 15 more times, concentrating on specific issues. For 2025, the CEOC maintained a primarily virtual meeting schedule that complied with the Open Public Meetings Act. This ongoing virtual format aims to enhance public access and foster greater participation among CEOC members, regardless of their location. The CEOC in-person meeting in May featured a presentation from the University of Washington Center for an Informed Public (CIP) on the risks and impacts of mis-, dis-, and malinformation, along with a cybersecurity update from the Washington Secretary of State Office that reviewed Washington State's strengths and challenges concerning election security.

Following the 2024 amendment to our bylaws, obligating all CEOC members to undergo election observation training and to observe a minimum of one election annually, every member (100%) is now a certified King County Elections (KCE) observer. As a result, the majority of members were able to participate as observers in the 2025 elections, including conducting observations at ballot box locations, vote centers and at the Department of Elections facility in Renton.

Overall participation in CEOC meetings has remained strong, with consistently high attendance and active engagement from members. Participation has been even

more robust within the specialized workgroups, where collaboration and discussion continue to elevate both the depth and quality of the committee's oversight of King County Elections. This increased involvement has also strengthened members' confidence in their roles as representatives serving the residents of King County.

Member satisfaction has continued to rise—extending a positive trend that began in 2022—with notable gains in perceptions of purpose, effectiveness, and overall fulfillment. Although national discourse around elections remains marked by skepticism, confidence in local election administration stands resilient and distinct from these broader narratives.

At the May meeting, Chair Juarez announced his departure from CEOC. CEOC wishes to recognize his many years of service, commend his unwavering advocacy, and acknowledge his significant contributions to both CEOC and KCE. In his absence, Christopher Hays has been fulfilling the Chair duties as the Interim Chair.

As emphasized in prior reports, KCE continues to exemplify transparency and innovation in election administration, setting a standard that minimizes the potential for misinformation and error.

When opportunities for improvement have been identified, the CEOC has been promptly informed, and Director Wise has remained readily accessible to address questions and consider the committee's recommendations. In many instances, KCE has gone beyond responding to committee inquiries—proactively requesting time on CEOC meeting agendas to provide briefings, after-action reviews, and updates on emerging issues or irregularities. This ongoing exchange of information has been instrumental in maintaining transparency and fostering public trust. A proactive and communicative elections department remains one of the most effective mechanisms for ensuring accountability and adherence to the high standards that define KCE's operations.

The committee is pleased to announce the achievement of full membership status for the body and its designated community representative seats as of December 2025. Most notably, the committee successfully filled the four-year vacant seat reserved for the Vietnamese-speaking community representative. This accomplishment is essential for ensuring a diverse spectrum of perspectives and ideas, thereby fostering comprehensive deliberations on how to better serve the community at large and each individual community.

Continued Focus on Public Confidence and Oversight

During 2025, the CEOC advanced its work plan to serve the public interest in ensuring the continuation of conducting free, fair, and transparent elections by supporting the collaboration with the Council, the Department of Elections, and the community. The majority of the Committee's work took place through specialized workgroups, led by Vice Chairs and organized into three main areas:

- Election Monitoring, Vice Chair Mathew Patrick Thomas
- Best Practices and Participation, Vice Chair Christopher Hays

Since Vice Chair Hays assumed the role of Interim Chair in September, the Best Practices and Participation workgroup appointed a new vice chair in November to lead the group. Interim Chair Hays continued to preside over the workgroup meetings in September and October to ensure continuity. In November, Interim Chair Hays formally assumed the position of Chair of the CEOC through a voting process.

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

Progress on 2025 CEOC Commitments and our new 2026 Commitments

Last year, the CEOC committed to undertake work related to two 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 the CEOC members' election and Canvassing Board observing program.

Status: Complete/Ongoing. Following the successful amendment of its bylaws, the CEOC now requires all members to complete Elections Observation training. The committee achieved full compliance, with 100% of members completing the training and the majority participating in at least one election observation. This standard is maintained on an ongoing basis, recognizing the annual turnover of members and the two-year expiration period of the training certification.

New Commitment #2: Identifying actionable strategies and best practices to enhance translation accuracy, accessibility, and inclusivity, including the consistent use of plain language principles to help all voters better understand election initiatives, information, and materials.

Status: In Progress. CEOC members have observed and received community testimony highlighting the barriers created by inadequate language translation and the confusion that complex or unclear language can cause for voters. The CEOC recognizes the robust efforts and teams KCE has dedicated to this issue and is committed to collaborating with KCE to continue finding strategies to remove these barriers further.

CEOC Recommendation to Council

The CEOC formally recommends that the King County Council consider adopting a resolution expressing support for the integrity and effectiveness of King County's election system, the professionalism of the election staff who administer it, and the demonstrated reliability of Washington State's vote-by-mail process.

This recommendation arises from the bipartisan Election Monitoring workgroup's observation of increasing public discourse nationwide regarding election administration and voting methods. Misinformation and misperceptions about election systems have the potential to reduce voter confidence and participation. By contrast, King County's vote-by-mail system continues to exemplify transparency, accessibility, and security, consistently delivering accurate and trustworthy election outcomes. Affirming confidence in Washington State's vote-by-mail system, managed by King County Elections, sends a vital message to residents that King County is dedicated to preserving a voting system that ensures more equitable access and upholds the integrity of secure, transparent elections.

Sample Resolution:

WHEREAS King County Elections administers secure, accurate, and accessible elections that have earned national recognition for integrity and transparency; and
WHEREAS election workers and staff are public servants who uphold the democratic process with professionalism and dedication; and
WHEREAS unfounded attacks and misinformation nationally have eroded public trust and endangered election workers; and
WHEREAS amid a national conversation over the future of vote by mail, Washington's system continues to provide secure, accessible, and trusted elections for millions of voters;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the King County Council affirms its support for King County Elections staff, recognizes the integrity and trustworthiness of the vote-by-mail system, and calls on all residents to have confidence in the county's election processes.

Conclusion

The Citizens' Elections Oversight Committee continues to serve a vital and distinctive role within King County. As the only local body of its kind in the state, the CEOC provides an essential link between the public, the Department of Elections, and the King County Council. The Committee's effectiveness is made possible through the strong partnership and shared commitment to transparency between Director Julie Wise and King County Elections. Their responsiveness to the Committee's requests for information, collaboration, and engagement exemplifies the Department's dedication to accountability and public trust.

The CEOC extends its sincere appreciation to Director Wise, the dedicated staff of King County Elections, and the Council staff who provide consistent and expert support to our work. King County continues to be well served by its award-winning and nationally recognized Elections Department, whose leadership and professionalism uphold the highest standards of accuracy, fairness, and integrity in elections administration.

The Committee looks forward to continuing its oversight and advisory role on behalf of the residents of King County and thanks the Council for the privilege of serving our community.