

Election Administration in Kentucky

Election administration duties in Kentucky are shared by three stakeholders: the office of the Secretary of State; the State Board of Elections; and the 120 County Clerks throughout the Commonwealth.

The Secretary of State, per KRS 117.015(2)(a), is the Commonwealth's Chief Election Official. The officeholder is elected by the statewide voting populace every four years and is tasked with election-related duties that include accepting certain nomination filings, determining ballot positions, and receiving certified vote totals from counties. The Secretary of State is an ex officio, nonvoting member of the State Board of Elections.

Per KRS 117.015(1), the State Board of Elections is "an independent agency of state government, which shall administer the election laws of the state and supervise registration and purgation of voters within the state." The Board consists of eight voting members, the Secretary of State (who is a non-voting member), and an Executive Director (who may only vote to break a tie in the selection of the chair of the board). Of the voting members, four are Democrats and four are Republicans, each serving a four year term (terms are staggered to replace only two members at a given time). By statute, a new member must be of the same party affiliation as the member they replace. Six of the voting members are appointed by the Governor from lists provided by the state party central committees. The other two voting members, must be retired County Clerks are appointed by the Governor from a list provided by the Kentucky County Clerk's Association. The State Board is statutorily authorized to promulgate administrative regulations necessary to properly carry out its duties of administering election laws and supervising registration and purgation of voters.

Every four years, each of Kentucky's 120 counties elects their own County Clerk. County Clerks have numerous responsibilities, including overseeing of their county's elections. At the county level, Clerks are responsible for registering voters, keeping voter registrations up-to-date, providing voting locations, accepting certain nomination filings, recruiting poll workers for election-day, maintaining and securing their voting machines, and providing election results once the election process is complete. While Clerks share voter registration information with the State Board, the County Clerk is the registrar of record for each voter within their county. Per KRS 117.035(2), County Clerks hold a statutorily-granted seat on their local County Board of Elections and may choose to serve in that position even in years that they are on the ballot themselves.