



www.friendsofdorothybrown.org

P.O. Box 17405, Chicago, Illinois 60602

773.814.5273

“Now is the time for new ideas, not new taxes. I promise on my first day in office as Cook County President, I will begin working to lower the sales tax. The County budget will never again be balanced on the backs of working families. Together, we will bring a new era of fiscal responsibility to Cook County.”

– Dorothy Brown

Dorothy Brown’s Plan to Reform the Budgeting Process and Eliminate Wasteful and Patronage Spending

I. Introduction

As President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, I will hold the line on taxes by enhancing revenue from innovative sources, cutting spending and increasing the efficiency of county government. My 3-point plan for budget reform calls for the implementation of:

- Introduce zero base budgeting;
- Stop last minute budgeting and begin Coordinated budgeting; and
- Creation of a Citizen Budget Review Commission

True budgeting reform will only be effective with the elimination of wasteful and patronage spending. To accomplish this monumental task, as Cook County Board President I will;

- Ensure total compliance with the Shakman Decree;
- Increase Consolidation, Joint Purchasing and other Efficiency Measures;
- Hire only qualified individuals into policy-making positions; and
- Reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in contract management.

With reform, innovation and fiscal responsibility we can change the direction of Cook County, and transform it from one of the Nation’s largest Counties to its single greatest.

II. Three Point Plan to Reform the Budgeting Process

Introduce Zero-base Budgeting to all Agencies under the President

Every fiscal year, Cook County uses a traditional approach to budgeting, in which managers start with the previous year's budget and add or subtract from it based on anticipated needs. In contrast, "zero-base" budgeting requires managers to justify every program and activity in the department. The budget line for every item is set to zero. The managers must rank-order the relative importance of each activity and determine its cost. Money is then allocated to the various departments based on what is currently needed, not the previous year's budget.ⁱ

Combined with a total quality management system, zero-based budgeting has saved businesses and governments, money across the country, including McHenry County, which will finish this fiscal year in the black despite a sharp decline in revenues.ⁱⁱ

Zero-based budgeting has considerable advantages for Cook County. It can lead to a more efficient allocation of resources because it is based on needs and benefits, and cut waste. The process of putting together the budget can:

- Help managers detect inflated line items;
- Increase coordination and communication within a department and an entire agency;
- Identify wasteful and obsolete operations; and
- Force departments to align their goals to the overall mission of the agency.ⁱⁱⁱ

As President of the Cook County Board, I will introduce zero-based budgeting for Cook County.

Begin Timely and Coordinated Budgeting

I will organize all the departments, agencies, and elected officials in Cook County government to into sub-groups based upon their mission. Annually each of these groups will review their budgets collectively to:

- Eliminate redundant spending;
- Increase interdepartmental and agency coordination; and
- Bring elected officials together in agreement on the direction of their offices.

Additionally, when I am President of the Cook County Board we will pass the budget by the of the fiscal year on November 30th. Waiting till February 28th, and stopping the clock is ineffective, and dangerous. The services Cook County government provides are both vitally important to residents and extremely varied. We need to ensure our resources are assigned in the more efficient method possible.

Create a Citizens Budget Review Commission

As President I will open the County budget to an independent committee of citizens to review it in-depth on behalf of the entire population. A Citizen Audit Advisory Committee was created in Maricopa County Arizona, home of Phoenix, to restore faith in the County government and make recommendations to aid the elimination of waste.

Similar to Maricopa County's Committee the Commission would be charged with increasing internal communication on the budget process, reviewing the audit systems used by County Government, and eliminating redundant and wasteful budgeting and auditing processes.^{iv} Members of the Commission will have a demonstrated knowledge of financial reporting, auditing, or accounting, and be independent of political ties that would make them unable to perform a fair and unbiased assessment of County finances.^v

III. Eliminate Wasteful and Patronage Spending

Uphold and Enforce the Shakman Decree

Cook County is under federal court order (the Shakman Decree) to end abuses in hiring and promotions. As a result of political discrimination, the County has had to pay \$2,935,850 in damages to individuals who were financially injured by unlawful practices.^{vi} Among the notorious patronage practices uncovered were:

- "Downtown" Cook County offices overruling the hiring and promotion recommendations of competent and ethical departmental managers;
- Sloppy personnel records that mask a political hires job responsibilities;
- Competent, non-political staff were doing the work of under qualified and underperforming political hires; and
- Retaliation against non-political hires through inconvenient transfers to another department or shift.

The court-appointed compliance administrator has outlined multiple tasks for Cook County to create a competent hiring process. Among the items called for are uniform job classifications, continued training for human resources screeners, verification of employment application documentation and internally consistent language in job postings. Also, the compliance administrator has called for vigorous anti-retaliation policies to ensure that all employees are comfortable in reporting illegal patronage practices.

As President, I will work diligently to bring Cook County into compliance with the Shakman decree. In addition, to prevent ghost patrolling and low show performance, as well as ensure a high quality workforce, I will:

- Implement an Automated Personnel Application Scoring System to limit the subjective scoring that results from the interview process;
- Offer whistle-blower protection to all employees who report abuses of hiring and promotional policies;
- Link the County's Internal Audit Departments to monitor compliance with the Code of Ethics;
- Introduce biometric technology for the personnel timekeeping system; and
- Send worksite inspectors to worksites, whether run by the County or by contractors and subcontractors, to verify that work is being performed as promised.

Increase Consolidation, Joint Purchasing and other Efficiency Measures

Cook County can save money, improve efficiency, cut waste and prevent abuse by reforming business processes across the board.

- Joint purchasing of health insurance for local government employees;
- Issuing bimonthly paychecks to employees; and
- Implementing a biometric timekeeping system to accurately track employee time.

- Joint Purchasing of Health Insurance and Other Goods and Services for Cook County

At present, the City of Chicago has an agreement with six other local governments to purchase prescription drug coverage jointly for employees. Cook County should mirror this effort to negotiate major purchases for County government.

A 2001 study by the Civic Federation found that Chicago and the six other governments could save \$40.1 million in one year and \$222 million over five years if they pursued a joint purchasing strategy for health care insurance.^{vii} I will work with other governmental agencies to implement such a strategy.

- Issue Bimonthly Paychecks instead of 26 payments

At present, County employees are paid every two weeks, for a total of 26 payments a year. To save money on processing, printing and mailing costs, the County could issue paychecks twice a month, as is done in many private organizations.

- Implement Biometric, Automated Timekeeping System

As President, I would introduce a biometric hand reader system for employees to sign in and out for the day. Under this system, employees punch in by swiping a badge or keying a number, and then placing their hand on the device to verify they are who they say they are. This system would help reduce timekeeping abuses, and helps management monitor the amount of time that employees are truly on the clock.

Hire only qualified individuals into Policy-making and Exempt Positions

In April 2009, the President of the Cook County Board fired the Chief Financial Officer, for her role in the hiring and promotion of a former busboy. In November 2008, the busboy was hired by the current

administration into a \$48,000 a year human resources position. He was bussing tables at a downtown restaurant where he was noticed by the current President and put on the County payroll. He moved up quickly into a position paying more than \$60,000 a year. During his four months on the payroll, the busboy was sent to jail twice--and the Chief Financial Officer bailed him out on both occasions. Furthermore, he was paid by the County while he was in jail and the Chief Financial Officer signed off on time cards for time that he didn't work. Meanwhile, his criminal background check revealed he had a criminal record.^{viii}

The scandal has continued to develop. In September, prosecutors in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office subpoenaed county financial records as part of a widening criminal investigation related to the hiring of the steakhouse busboy.^{ix}

This scandal is appalling. The President should lead by example and only hire qualified individuals for administrative positions. My philosophy is professionalism over politics. I will not hire unqualified people and undeserving people at taxpayer's expense.

Reduce Waste, Fraud, and Abuse in Contract Management

During my tenure in the Clerk's Office I ended no bid contracts, reduced wasteful spending, and have never taken a raise. I will continue building on that record of reform by;

- Promise that all County contracts are awarded on a merit basis;
- Fully complying with all County, State and Federal oversight agencies; and
- Increasing ethics training so that all County employees are familiar with, and enforce the Code of Ethics.

IV. Conclusion

Trust between citizens and their elected officials are vital in all levels of government. The trust between the Cook County government and its residents has eroded in the last few years due to scandals and corruption in hiring, asset control, employee time management, and ever increasing taxes. I have outlined a concrete plan of how I will improve the budgeting processes in County government, while simultaneously reducing the waste and patronage spending. Only through this two pronged approach can the next Board President repair the relationship between County government and County residents. I believe that I am the proven leader, with the proven record of success; we need to undertake this crucial task.

ⁱ City of Chicago FY 2006 Proposed Budget: Analysis and Recommendations, The Civic Federation, November 30, 2005. See footnote 24.

ⁱⁱ "County Government will end year in black,"

http://www.nwherald.com/articles/2009/09/22/r_uypcizlssuc7tsm4dk4qg/index.xml

ⁱⁱⁱ "Zero-based Budgeting," www.accountingformanagement.com

^{iv} "Charter of the Maricopa County Citizen's Audit Advisory Committee,"

http://www.maricopa.gov/Internal_audit/auditCommittee.aspx

^v "Charter of the Maricopa County Citizen's Audit Advisory Committee,"

http://www.maricopa.gov/Internal_audit/auditCommittee.aspx

^{vi} Fourth Report of the Compliance Administrator, U.S. District Court, case 69 C 2145.

^{vii} City of Chicago FY 2006 Proposed Budget: Analysis and Recommendations, The Civic Federation, November 30, 2005. See footnote 24.

^{viii} Schulte, Sarah, Former Cook County Employee Speaks Out, [abc7chicago](http://abc7chicago.com), June 16, 2009

^{ix} Dardick, Hal & Walberg, Matthew, Todd Stroger: probe expands into Cook County Board president's hiring of ex-busboy." [Chicago Tribune](http://chicagotribune.com), September 18, 2009.

DOROTHY BROWN