



Civil Service/Collective Bargaining

On November 4th, as part of the Joint General Election, Victoria voters will vote on whether to adopt civil service and collective bargaining for the Victoria Fire Department.

Why was this election called?

The election was not initiated by the City; rather, it is the result of a petition organized by the Victoria Firefighters Association that was signed by enough Victoria voters to trigger an election.

On April 24th, the Victoria Firefighters Association presented a petition seeking the adoption of Chapters 143 and 174 of the Texas Local Government Code, related to civil service and collective bargaining, respectively. The number of signatures on the petition was at least 10% of the number of voters who voted in the most recent municipal election. Under state law, this means that these two propositions must be brought to the voters for an election.

How will these items appear on the ballot? Are they two separate propositions?

Yes. Two separate propositions will appear on the ballot:

- City of Victoria Proposition A: Adoption of the fire fighters' and police officers' civil service law for the Victoria Fire Department. (NOTE: This is the required legal language for this ballot item. In Victoria's case, the civil service law is solely being considered for firefighters, not police officers.)
- City of Victoria Proposition B: Adoption of the state law applicable to fire fighters that establishes collective bargaining if a majority of the affected employees favor representation by an employees' association, preserves the prohibition against strikes and lockouts, and provides penalties for strikes and lockouts.

Do either of these propositions affect the Victoria Police Department?

No. Although the required legal language for Proposition A mentions police officers, this proposition solely concerns the adoption of civil service for the Victoria Fire Department, since this was the department specified in the Victoria Firefighters Association's petition.

Who is eligible to vote on these propositions?

City of Victoria residents living within City limits may vote on City of Victoria Propositions A and B.

If these measures are adopted, can they be repealed later?

Civil service (Chapter 143) cannot be repealed in cities with a population of 50,000 or more (Victoria's population exceeds this limit).

Collective bargaining (Chapter 174) can be repealed through petition and election, similar to the adoption process.

What would these measures do?

The first measure, "state civil service," would create a new Civil Service Commission for the fire department to oversee hiring, promotions, pay, and disciplinary measures, including physical and written exams for hiring and promotions. These standards would be determined by state law and by the commission. Commission members would be appointed by the city manager and confirmed by Council.

The second measure, "collective bargaining," would grant collective bargaining power to the Victoria Fire Department and would require the City to formally negotiate with the Victoria Firefighters Association on pay, benefits, and working conditions.

At the Oct. 8 City Council meeting, the City Council invited public sector attorney Frank Garza, a subject matter expert in civil service and collective bargaining, to provide an informative overview of these topics. Residents can watch his presentation at www.victoriatx.gov/tv15 or read the PowerPoint slides at www.victoriatx.gov/vfa-election.



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What is the City currently doing to offer competitive pay for the Victoria Fire Department?

The City has consistently prioritized first responders in City-wide pay programs. For example, the Victoria Fire Department and the Victoria Police Department are the only departments to have step plans that include pay increases every two years.

Most recently, the City adopted a historic employee pay program that includes \$1.29 million worth of competitive pay increases for firefighters across all ranks. This includes 9-10% raises for entry-level firefighters, while some higher-level positions will see increases of more than 20% in an effort to improve retention for these positions.

The City has also increased entry-level pay for firefighters by 38% over the past five years.

Do firefighters currently have a way to provide input to City management and City Council regarding pay and benefits?

Yes. Through the Victoria Firefighter's Association, firefighters are able to meet with department leadership, City management and City Council to share any input surrounding pay, benefits and any other items. As a recent example, the compensation subcommittee established by the mayor took the association's feedback into account when developing the historic FY2026 pay program.

Does the fire department currently follow a standard process for hirings and promotions?

Yes. The fire department already has established prerequisites and testing for each position, which are included in job postings and/or promotional testing opportunities. The prerequisites and testing procedures already in place are similar to those outlined under civil service. However, under civil service, these testing standards, guidelines and procedures would be determined by state law and by the Civil Service Commission, rather than solely on department leadership.

Can fire department personnel appeal disciplinary actions under the current system?

Yes. Fire department personnel, like any City employee, can appeal department management decisions through Human Resources and through the city manager's office.

Where can I find more information?

Information about the November 4th Joint General Election, including early voting schedule and polling locations, is available at www.vctxelections.org.

Information and resources about civil service and collective bargaining are available at www.victoriatx.gov/vfa-election.