



Department of Law BGA Policy 2026 Budget Snapshot

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Departmental Highlights

Snapshot: Appropriation & Staffing Changes from 2025 Budget

	2025 Budgeted	2026 Proposed	Net Change	Percent Change	Average Annual Rate of Change (2011-2025)	Inflation- adjusted Rate of Change (2011-2024)
Appropriations	\$45,918,684	\$47,954,637	\$2,035,953	4.4%	2.2%	-0.1%
Positions & FTEs	406	418	12	3.0%	-0.4%	NA

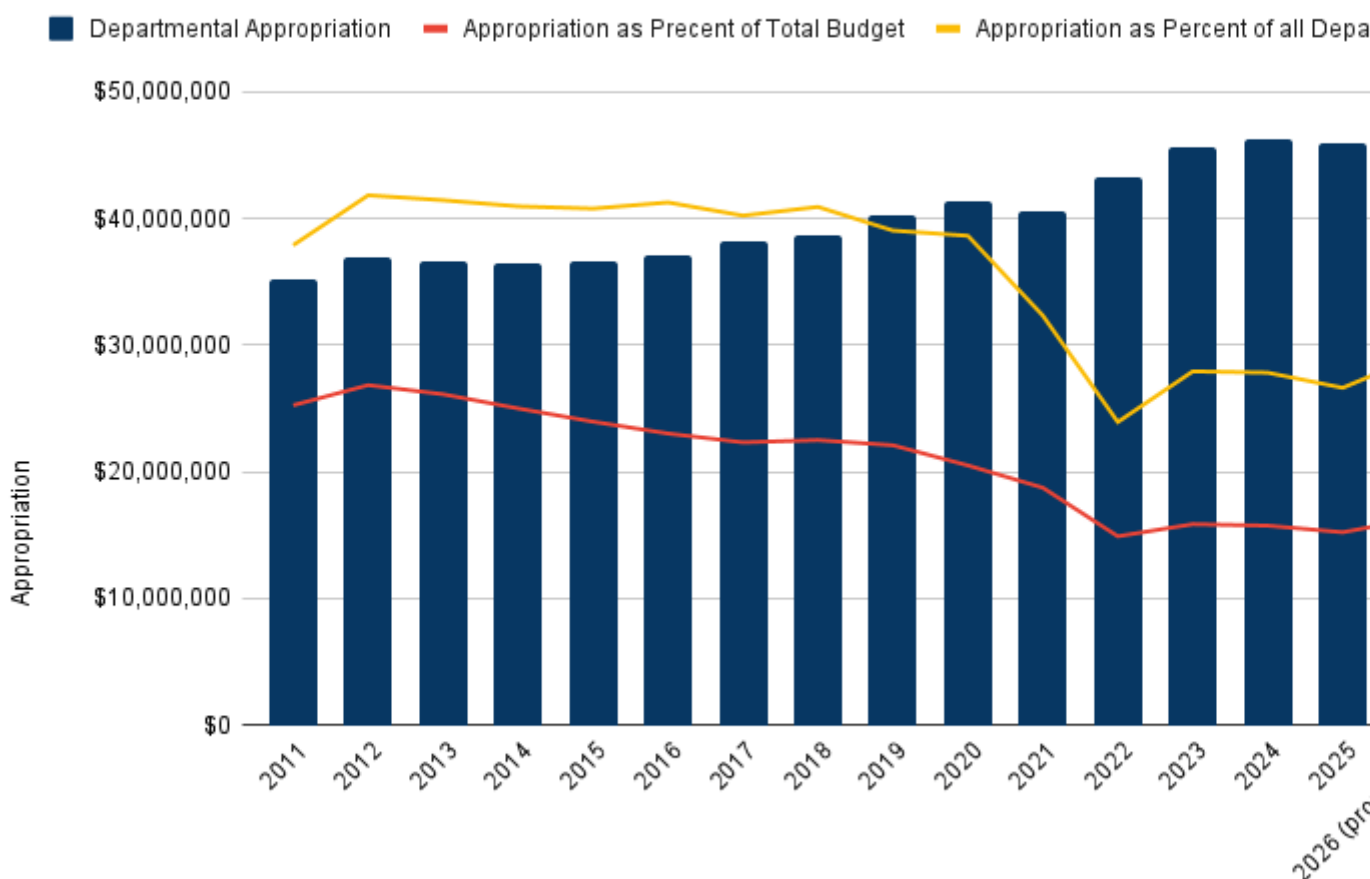
- 12 of the department’s budgeted full-time positions were persistent vacancies, meaning that the same title/division/section/subsection combination was vacant for all eight months of available data, with positions in the various Assistant Corporation Counsel titles making up slightly more than half of those persistent vacancies.

- Despite persistent vacancies in both titles, the 2026 budget proposal’s increased DoL headcount comes from nine additional positions budgeted in the Assistant Corporation Counsel III title, and three in Assistant Corporation Counsel II.
- Apart from a \$1.8 million (4.3%) increase in salaries and wages, DoL’s year-over-year changes at the individual appropriation level were all under a million dollars. A roughly -\$92,000 (-6%) decline in outside contracting through the professional and technical services category was the department’s largest single-category decline.

Historical Context

The Department of Law’s budget has historically grown at roughly the same rate as non-grant appropriations, and therefore slightly slower than the citywide rates, which were driven up by COVID-19 relief funds in recent years: from 2011-2025, DoL appropriations grew at a rate of 2.2% annually, which equates to a slight, -0.1% decline when adjusted for inflation. City budgets as a whole over the same period grew and an annual average rate of 8.3% (inflation-adjusted 4.4%).

DoL Appropriation, Chicago City Budgets 2011-2026 (proposed)

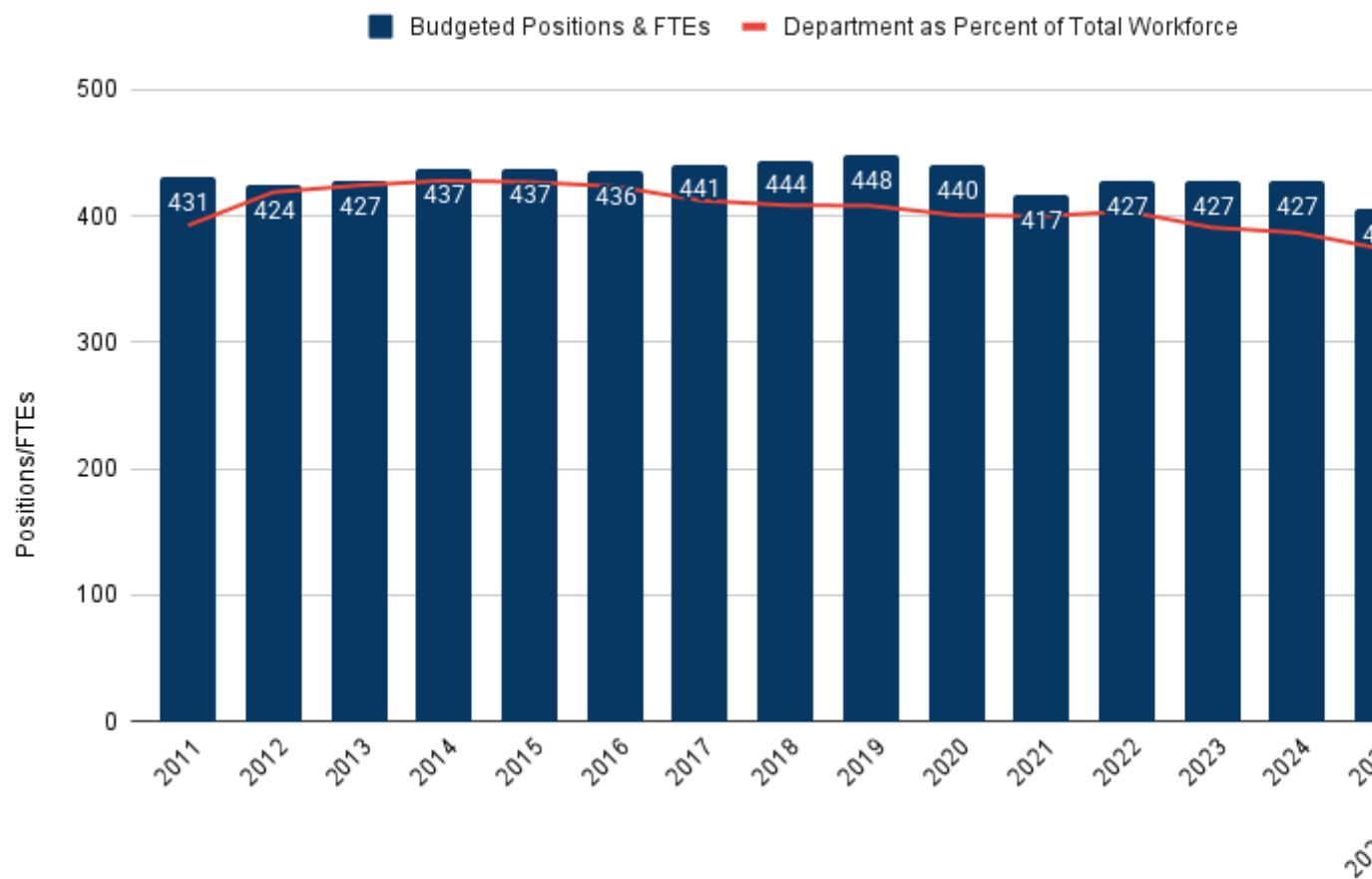


Over the past three complete budget years for which local fund actuals/encumbrances data is available, DoL spent on average 85% of its locally funded budget, compared to the citywide average 86.4% local

fund spend.

Staffing levels remained fairly consistent for most of DoL’s recent history, with cuts in 2020 and 2024 only partially offset by subsequent year-over-year increases. Overall, the department’s budgeted headcount from 2011-2025 declined at an average rate of -0.4% annually, compared to a citywide average annual change of -0.1%.

DoL Budgeted Workforce, 2011-2026 (proposed)



From February through September of 2025, the months for which the city released full-time position vacancy data, DoL averaged a 10.3% vacancy rate, compared to the citywide average of 11.2%.

12 of the department’s budgeted full-time positions were persistent vacancies, meaning that the same title/division/section/subsection combination was vacant for all eight months of available data, with positions in the various Assistant Corporation Counsel titles making up slightly more than half of those persistent vacancies:

Budgeted Position Changes

Despite persistent vacancies in both titles, the 2026 budget proposal’s increased DoL headcount comes from nine additional positions budgeted in the Assistant Corporation Counsel III title, and three in Assistant Corporation Counsel II.

Appropriations

DoL is almost entirely locally-funded, with a small amount of grant funding making up less than one percent of the department’s appropriations both last year and in the proposed 2026 budget.

Roughly 80% of DoL’s budget comes from the Corporate Fund, with small appropriations from the airport, sewer and water, vehicle, and TIF administration funds making up the rest of its locally-funded budget.

Fund	2025 Budgeted	2026 Proposed	Net Change from 2025	Percent Change from 2025	Percent of 2026 Recommended Funds
Corporate Fund	\$36,492,597	\$38,186,833	\$1,694,236	4.6%	79.6%
Chicago O’Hare Airport Fund	\$2,581,714	\$2,757,778	\$176,064	6.8%	5.8%
Vehicle Tax Fund	\$2,257,423	\$2,278,736	\$21,313	0.9%	4.8%
Water Fund	\$1,940,440	\$1,938,887	-\$1,553	-0.1%	4.0%
Tax Increment Financing Administration Fund	\$1,022,717	\$1,065,420	\$42,703	4.2%	2.2%
Sewer Fund	\$1,007,394	\$1,062,102	\$54,708	5.4%	2.2%
Chicago Midway Airport Fund	\$511,399	\$541,881	\$30,482	6.0%	1.1%
State Grant Fund	\$105,000	\$123,000	\$18,000	17.1%	0.3%

Largest Appropriations

As with most departments, personnel costs make up the bulk of DEPT’s appropriations, with salaries and wages on payroll by far the largest expense category.

In 2024, the most recent complete budget year for which local fund actuals and encumbrances data is available, DoL spent 90% of its locally-funded budget.

Change from Previous Year

Apart from a \$1.8 million (4.3%) increase in salaries and wages, DoL’s year-over-year changes at the individual appropriation level were all under a million dollars. A roughly -\$92,000 (-6%) decline in

outside contracting through the professional and technical services category was the department's largest single-category decline.