

How My Office Handles Billions

By Cook County Treasurer

Two times a year, my office mails nearly 1.8 million property tax bills and collects about \$20 billion. That's not a typo — \$20 billion. As Cook County Treasurer, I oversee the second-largest property tax collection and distribution system in America.

However, I do far more than send out bills. My office is the financial center of Cook County. We collect tax payments and distribute those funds to nearly 2,200 local government agencies — from school districts and libraries to police departments, parks and public health systems. In turn, they put that money to work so it's ultimately returned to you in the form of government services.

These institutions depend on our accuracy and timeliness to keep your neighborhoods safe, your streets lit and your children educated.

Every dollar that comes in must be safeguarded, tracked and reported. That's why I've built an investment policy that prioritizes the safety of your money, and ensures there's always enough cash on hand to meet the County's obligations. Risk is minimized through investment diversification. While investment returns matter, protecting your tax dollars comes first — always.

I'm also responsible for submitting financial reports to the Cook County Board of Commissioners and for managing trust funds and other special accounts.

When taxes go unpaid, I must prepare delinquency lists, notify taxpayers, obtain court orders and conduct the annual tax sale (a legal process to recover unpaid taxes). This system is not designed to punish — it's built to enforce fairness. Everyone must pay his or her fair share.

My office also handles refunds when you overpay. Whether because of a duplicate payment, a reduction in your property's assessed value, or a court-ordered change in tax rates, we ensure that overpayments are returned. My office currently has \$105 million in available refunds from overpayments going back to 2006. We have an additional \$19 million in missed exemption payments going back to 2022. Those years are firm legal deadlines. By law, you can only get back overpayments going back 20 years and exemptions going back four. If you don't apply in time, you could lose the refund that you're owed — which we do not want to happen. That's why we've made it easier to check your property's refund status on our website, cookcountytreasurer.com, for free — no lawyer or middleman required.

Government should not be a mystery. My job is to make sure your money is handled with precision, integrity and absolute transparency. When the tax system works fairly, it builds trust. When it builds trust, it strengthens communities. That's the work we do every day — managing billions so that Cook County works.