



## COOK COUNTY BOARD OF REVIEW

Commissioner Larry R. Rogers, Jr.

Commissioner Dan Patlak

Commissioner Michael M. Cabonargi

BOARD OF REVIEW  
*wins national*  
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD  
— FOR —  
DAPS PROGRAM



# ANNUAL REPORT

ASSESSMENT YEAR 2016 • FISCAL YEAR 2017



## Table of Contents

Cook County Board of Review Responsibilities.....	1	Operational Highlights .....	6-7
Letter from Commissioners Rogers, Patlak and Cabonargi.....	2	Appeals Resulting in Reductions (Assessment Years 2005 - 2016) .....	8
What Changed with the New System .....	3	PTAB Appeals.....	9
Budget Highlights .....	4	Exempt Properties and the BOR .....	10
Employees and Appeals.....	5	2016 Tax Year Outreach Efforts .....	11
		Did You Know?.....	12

## OFFICES

### Main Office

County Building  
118 N. Clark St., Room 601  
Chicago, IL 60602  
Ph: 312/603-5542

### Satellite Offices

#### Bridgeview

10200 S. 76th Ave.  
Room 237  
Bridgeview, IL 60455  
Ph: 708/974-6074

#### Markham

16501 Kedzie Ave.  
Room 237  
Markham, IL 60426  
Ph: 708/232-4258

#### Maywood

1500 S. Maybrook Dr.  
Room 082  
Maywood, IL 60153  
Ph: 708/865-5508

#### Rolling Meadows

2121 Euclid Ave.  
Room 237  
Rolling Meadows, IL 60098  
Ph: 847/818-2067

#### Skokie

5600 Old Orchard Rd.  
Room 155  
Skokie, IL 60076  
Ph: 847/470-7522

## COOK COUNTY BOARD OF REVIEW RESPONSIBILITIES

The Cook County Board of Review (formerly the Board of Tax Appeals) was created by the 89th General Assembly in 1998 under statutory changes that established a three member Board of Commissioners elected from three electoral districts.

The Cook County Board of Review (hereinafter “BOR”) is vested with quasi-judicial powers to adjudicate taxpayer complaints or recommend exempt status of real property, which includes: residential, commercial, industrial, condominium property, and vacant land. Powers granted to the BOR include the following:

1. Correct factual mistakes;
2. Review certificates of error;
3. Order the Assessor to revise and correct the assessed value of property;
4. Recommend property for tax exempt status; and
5. Defend assessment decisions for properties appealed at the Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board (PTAB).

The BOR deals only with assessed valuations before equalization, not with the tax rate or the amount of the tax bill.

**Why does it matter** to Cook County Residents if the tax bills go out on time? When the tax bills are delayed, schools, libraries and other essential district services are forced into budget gaps. To fill those gaps, reserves may be tapped, which means that money is not earning interest, or, money is borrowed, and loan costs and interest fees are incurred. The cost to local government can be in the **MILLIONS OF DOLLARS**.

# 2016 ASSESSMENT YEAR ANNUAL REPORT LETTER FROM COMMISSIONERS

We are delighted to share that the Cook County Board of Review, the nation's largest assessment appeal board, has been recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The award honors innovative, effective county government programs that enhance services for residents. NACo recognized the Cook County Board of Review's Digital Appeals Processing System (DAPS) which transformed its paper-based process to a digital enterprise content management system.

The 2016 assessment review year surprisingly saw continued growth in the historic number of appeals filed at the Board of Review. Typically, the Board focuses on tri year cycles with a city tri year previously yielding the highest number of cases. However, with a surge in residential appeals in the northern tri-assessment year, a new narrative may be emerging.

With 208,000 cases filed in 2016, last year's record number of 184,000 cases was exceeded by fourteen percent (the Board has traditionally tracked volume by PIN's appealed and the number of cases filed has risen or fallen consistently with the PIN volume, however this year while PINs appealed is actually less than the previous year, the number of cases has increased). (see chart page 7)

Despite a record number of appeals and Board personnel remaining steady as it has the past four years, the Board was able to finish on time, assuring once again that tax bills would meet the statutorily required date. Our Digital Appeals Processing System (DAPS) played an integral role in our success and proved the county board's decision to fund the BOR's investment in the time and labor creating the system was worth the effort.

The Board of Review is happy to announce a new division focused on defending taxpayer's money and school funding. Working with the Cook County Board of Commissioners and the Cook County Board President, the Board of Review has created and funded a new division, the PTAB Defense Division. The purpose of the PTAB Defense Division is to defend the county's assessment decisions at the Illinois Property Tax Appeal

Board (PTAB), which provides property owners an opportunity to appeal BOR assessment decisions. Because of a four year backlog of cases at PTAB due to the volume of cases, taxing bodies in the County have a potential \$500 million liability in PTAB tax refunds. In the 2016 budget year, the Board saved all taxing districts \$132 million in PTAB refunds. This represents a 5.5% increase over 2015 when the Board saved \$125 million. Although we have had success in the past, as we discuss later in this report, the newly created division will be focused year round on defending final assessment decisions, tackling the volume of cases, and addressing the four year backlog which helped create this potential tax refund liability. In its first full year of operation, we anticipate the PTAB Defense Division will save Cook County at least an additional \$1 million and all county taxing districts an estimated additional \$11 million in property tax refunds over and above what we would have saved without the new division. In addition, we are continuing to digitize our Property Tax Appeal Board documents, which will allow for the same DAPS efficiencies provided to our assessment appeal review duties.

The Board's outreach program continues to educate taxpayers about their right to appeal, with over 150 total seminars presented by the three commissioners throughout Cook County in 2016. There has been a continued increase in first time attendance year over year that supports our mission of raising awareness with as many property owners as possible.

Lastly, hearing wait times were down for residential property owners at scheduled Board hearings. The average pro se taxpayer experienced reduced wait times to begin presenting their case to an analyst. More evidence than ever was submitted electronically prior to hearing dates, freeing up our staff for other tasks, resulting in a well-organized hearing experience for appellants and making the Board all the more efficient.



**LARRY R. ROGERS, JR.  
COMMISSIONER**



**DAN PATLAK  
COMMISSIONER**



**MICHAEL M. CABONARGI  
COMMISSIONER**

Sincerely,

Commissioner Larry R. Rogers, Jr.  
Commissioner Dan Patlak  
Commissioner Michael Cabonargi

# WHAT CHANGED WITH THE NEW SYSTEM

The addition of the Digital Assessment Appeals System (DAPS) as a new tool for analysts to use in the appeal process brought about significant changes that benefited analysts and appellants alike.

How did the new software tool affect operations internally and externally for the Board and for property owners?

## Hearings

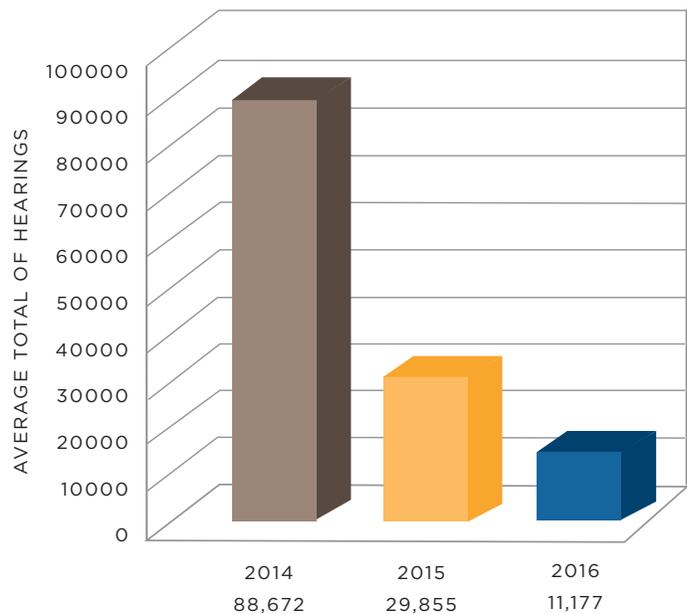
### Residential

With increased analyst stations in place, wait times for property owners that had requested a hearing were reduced even further. Using the DAPS system, the analyst is able to view the property owner's property and other pertinent information.

### Commercial

With the addition of DAPS tool for use in commercial hearings, the commercial analyst was able to prepare for a case in advance of the hearing as commercial analysts now know which cases they will be overseeing ahead of time. This advanced preparedness improved the hearing experience for all.

## Number of Requested Hearings



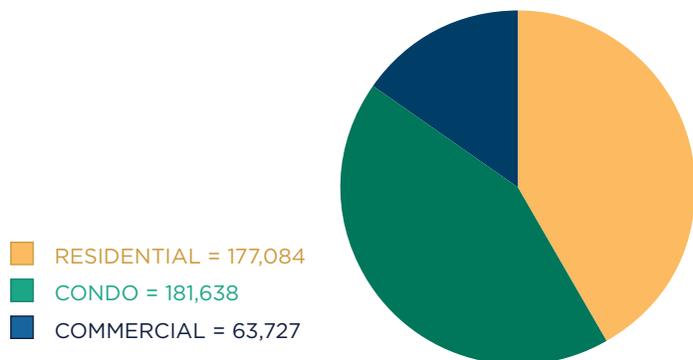
The drop in requested hearings between 2014 and 2015 is a result of having the new DAPS program in place that allows for evidence uploading online. Also, in 2015, a filing rule for attorney's was changed that eliminated the ability to request a hearing simply to grant document extension.

## Transparency

Whether commercial or residential, the new system provides greater transparency for the property owner. All analyst information - notes, evidence and decisions - are now available online if an account is created by the appellant. An online account allows the appellant to login and see the final decision rendered and any notes by the analysts.

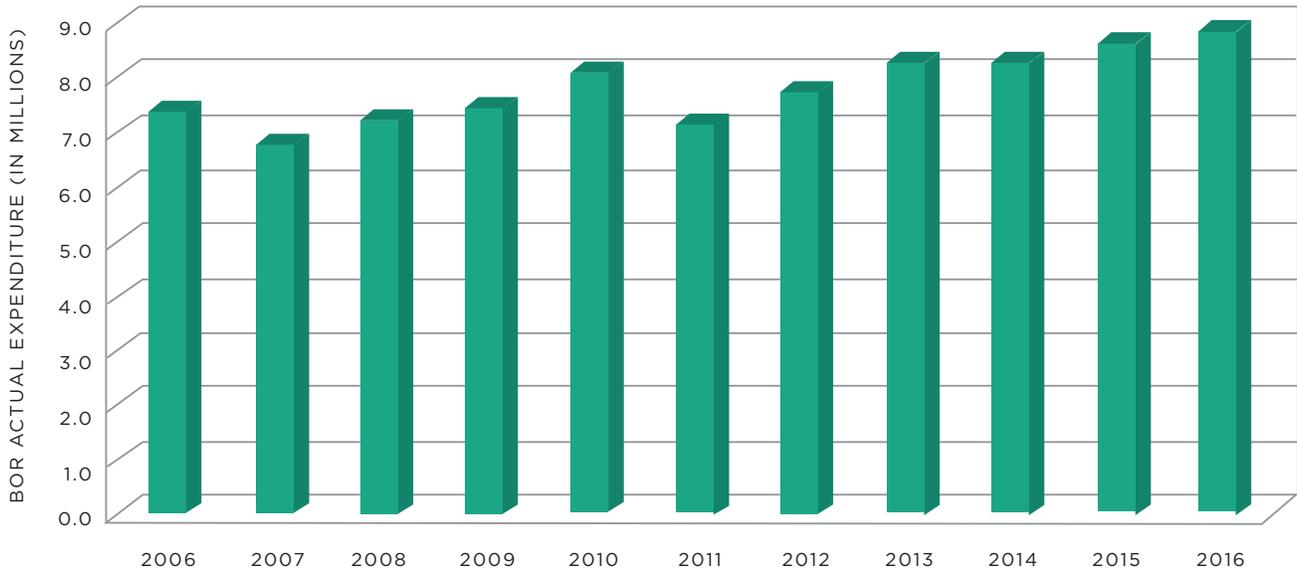
*\* This chart does not include vacant land or tax exempt properties.*

## Number of PINS Appealed by Property Type\*



# BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

## BOR Actual Expenditure



FISCAL YEAR	ACTUAL EXPENDITURE (\$ MILLION)
2006	7.4
2007	6.8
2008	7.3
2009	7.5
2010	8.1
2011	7.0
2012	7.8
2013	8.3
2014	8.3
2015	8.5
2016	8.8

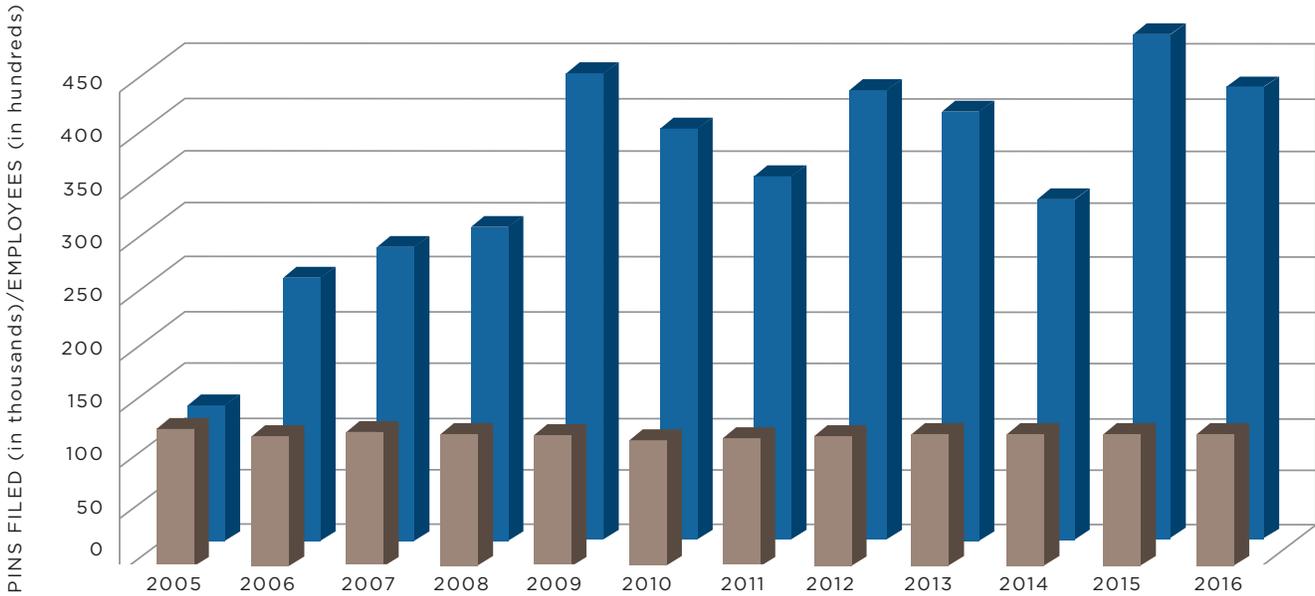
The BOR is an essential part of the property tax system. Recognizing its importance within this cycle, the BOR continually looks for ways to streamline its processes and improve efficiency.

*Note: The 2016 assessment year corresponds to the later part of the 2016 fiscal year and the beginning portion of the 2017 fiscal year.*

*The BOR fiscal year runs from Dec 01 thru Nov 30.*

# EMPLOYEES AND APPEALS

## Employees / Total PINS Filed



ASSESSMENT YEAR	EMPLOYEES (IN THOUSANDS)	PINS APPEALED (IN THOUSANDS)
2005	130	130
2006	122	247
2007	126	277
2008	123	295
2009	122	439
2010	118	386
2011	119	342
2012	124	423
2013	125	403
2014	125	319
2015	125	476
2016	125	422

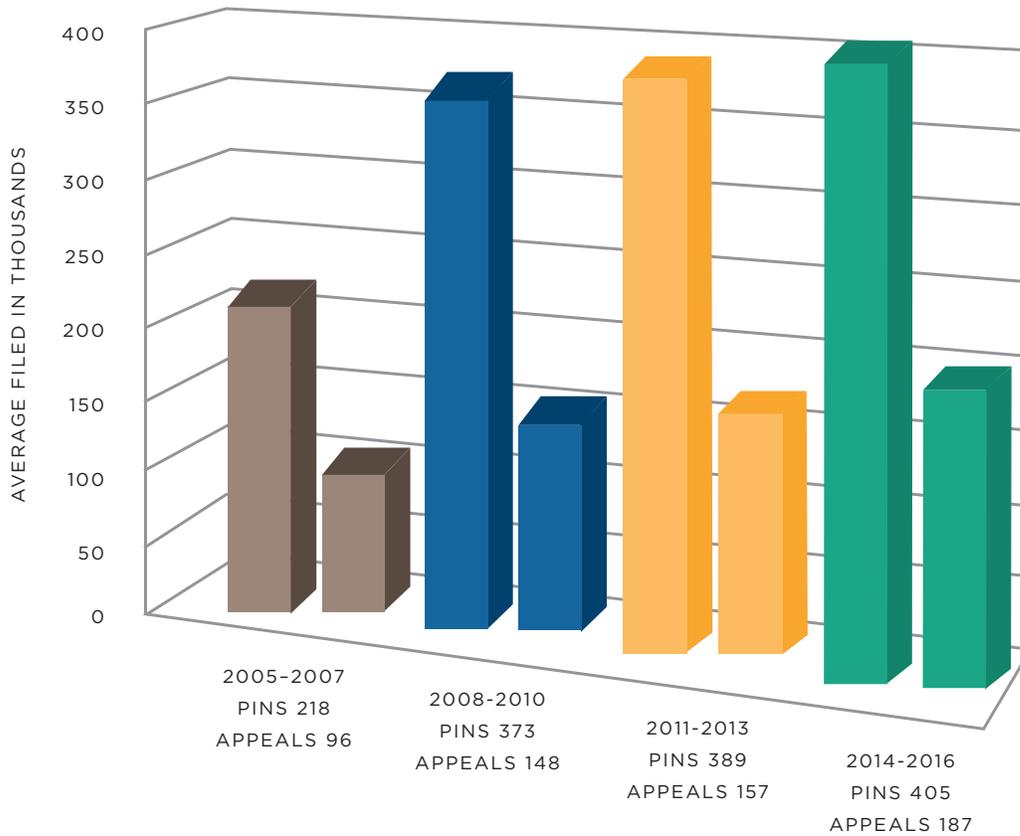
EMPLOYEES  
 TOTAL PINS FILED

In the 2016/2017 budget year, the BOR successfully reviewed and adjudicated all 422,449 appeals for assessment year 2016. Process re-engineering efforts and technology have helped to keep headcount steady.

*\*Over the past ten years the appeals filed have doubled primarily due to increased outreach activity and simplifying the appeal process.*

# OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

## Total PINS and Appeals Filed Assessment Years 2005-2016\*



ASSESSMENT YEAR	PINS FILED IN THOUSANDS	APPEALS FILED IN THOUSANDS	REASSESSMENT TRIENNIAL
2005	130	68	SOUTH SUBURBAN
2006	247	94	CITY
2007	277	125	NORTH SUBURBAN
2008	295	128	SOUTH SUBURBAN
2009	439	159	CITY
2010	386	158	NORTH SUBURBAN
2011	342	146	SOUTH SUBURBAN
2012	423	152	CITY
2013	403	174	NORTH SUBURBAN
2014	319	162	SOUTH SUBURBAN
2015	476	184	CITY
2016	422	208	NORTH SUBURBAN

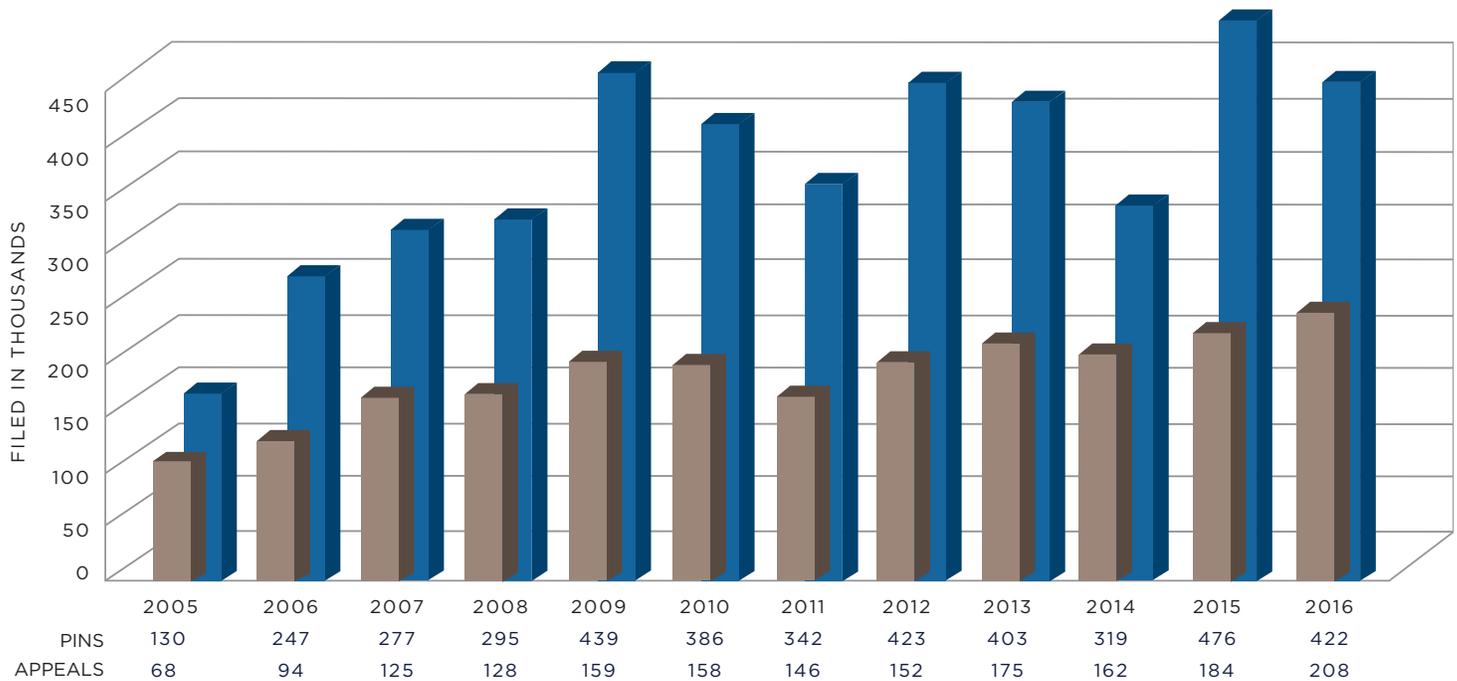
The BOR adjudicated 422,449 property complaints for tax year 2016.

\*The Cook County Assessor's Office cycles reassessments between the north suburbs, City of Chicago, and south suburbs. This bar chart reflects the triennial cycle starting with year 2005 to better illustrate year-to-year trends.

See CCAO Triennial Assessment Cycle Map page 14.

# OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

## Appeal Numbers vs PINs Year by Year



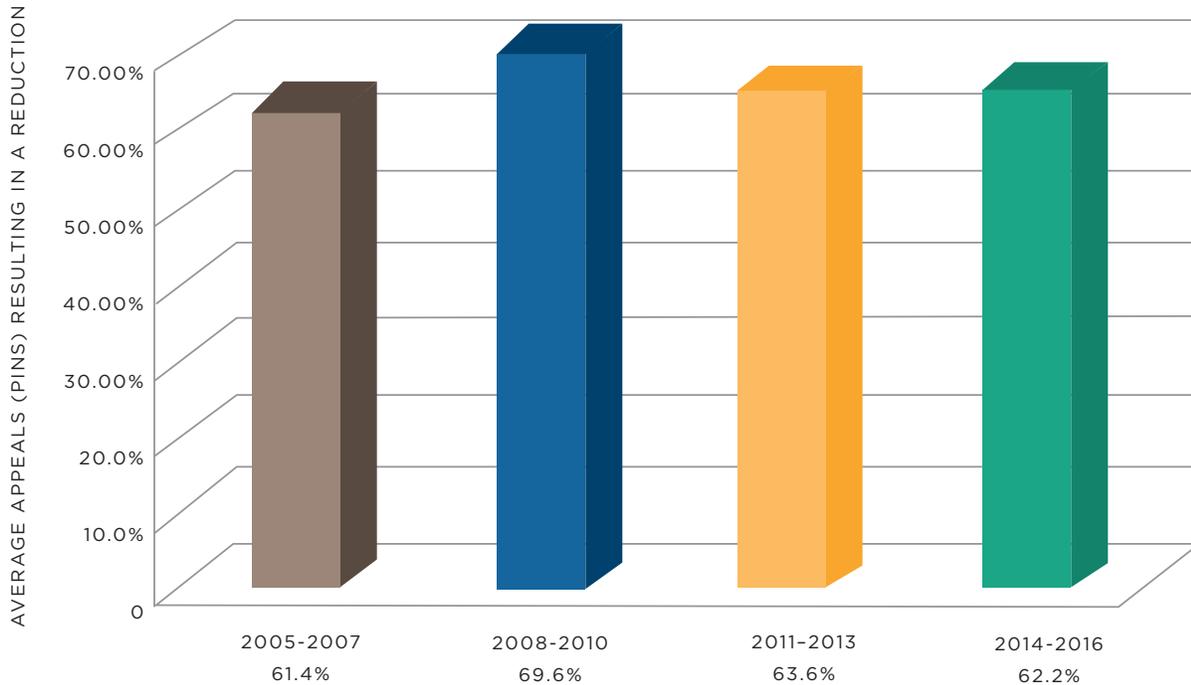
ASSESSMENT YEAR	PINS FILED IN THOUSANDS	APPEALS IN THOUSANDS
2005	130	68
2006	247	94
2007	277	125
2008	295	128
2009	439	159
2010	386	158
2011	342	146
2012	423	152
2013	403	175
2014	319	162
2015	476	184
2016	422	208

### New Narrative

Typically, the Board's reporting is focused on Triennial Assessment Cycles. Last year, the City tri-year yielded the highest number of parcels (Property Index Numbers (PINs) adjudicated. However, this session, the Northern tri assessment cycle, marked the highest number of complaints adjudicated in the Board's history. Please note that an assessment complaint may contain multiple parcels (PINs). The noted surge in complaints filed this year was due to an increase in residential complaints. A new narrative may be emerging.

# APPEALS RESULTING IN A REDUCTION

## Appeals Resulting in a Reduction Assessment Years 2005-2016\*



ASSESSMENT YEAR      APPEALS RESULTING IN A REDUCTION

2005	50.6%
2006	61.1%
2007	72.6%

2008	65.8%
2009	75.6%
2010	67.3%

2011	61.7%
2012	64.4%
2013	61.8%

2014	58.6%
2015	64.1%
2016	64%

The BOR reviews all assessment appeals presented by property owners. A variety of evidence is considered by the BOR when making its decisions, including evidence presented by the taxpayer. The number of reductions fluctuates year to year based on numerous factors. The responsibility of the BOR is to ensure a fair assessment.

\* The Cook County Assessor's Office cycles reassessments between the City of Chicago, and the north and south suburbs. This bar chart reflects the triennial cycle starting with year 2005 to better illustrate year-to-year trends.

# PTAB APPEALS



The BOR and Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board (PTAB) share a symbiotic relationship. The mandate of each entity is to provide taxpayers with an unbiased forum for appealing assessments at no cost to the property owner. PTAB is a forum to appeal the BOR's decision.

## PTAB Defense Division

The purpose of the newly created PTAB Defense Division here at the Board is to defend the County's assessment decisions full-time. PTAB does not have a yearly session so the new division will be focused year round on defending final assessment decisions, tackling the volume of cases, and addressing the four year backlog which helped create this potential tax refund liability. Previously, even without full-time dedicated PTAB defense staff, the Board successfully defended cases totaling \$132 million last year. Now the Board is building and expanding on this success to keep even more money for schools and government services.

In its first full year of operation, we anticipate the PTAB Defense Division will save Cook County at least an additional \$1 million and all county taxing districts an estimated additional \$11 million in PTAB property tax refunds. In addition, we are continuing to digitize our Property Tax Appeal Board documents, which will allow for the same DAPS efficiencies provided to our assessment appeal review duties.

Approximately 7-10% of BOR appeals go to PTAB annually. When a BOR decision is upheld, taxing bodies and Cook County residents save money.

Fiscal Year 2016:

**TAX DOLLARS SAVED**  
**\$132 MILLION**

the difference between assessment reductions requested by appellants and reductions granted by PTAB.

**2015 PTAB Caseload**

**22,049**

DOCKETS CLOSED

**7,808**

DOCKETS FOR HEARINGS

**310**

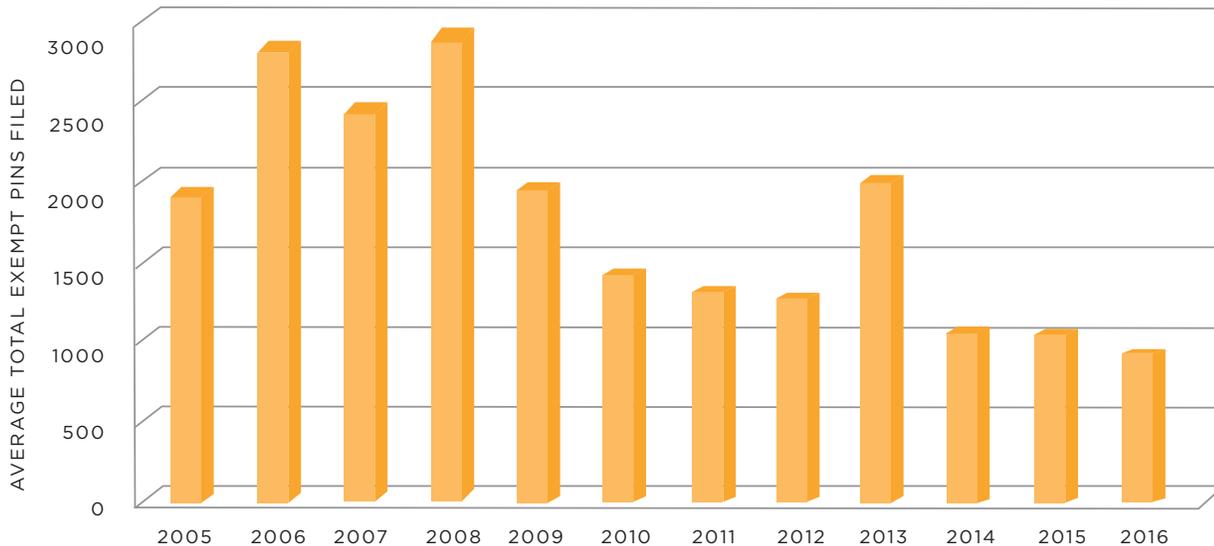
PTAB HEARING DAYS

# EXEMPT PROPERTIES & THE BOR

The BOR examines applications from governmental, charitable and religious organizations that believe they meet the qualifications for property tax exempt status. The requirements for property tax exempt status can vary. The BOR examines each case to determine whether the property is specifically exempt by statute and whether the property owner has met the required burden of proof. The BOR may hold a hearing in cases involving a question of law, an incomplete file, or when a taxing body objects to an application. In either case, petitioners are notified by mail of their hearing date. Following the hearing, a recommendation on exempt status is sent to the Illinois Department of Revenue.

While the BOR makes a recommendation, only the State of Illinois can remove property from the property tax roll. In assessment year 2016, the BOR processed 960 exempt parcels requesting exempt status.

Exempt PINs Filed\*



FISCAL YEAR	TOTAL PINS APPEALED
2005	1,869
2006	2,654
2007	2,404
2008	2,807
2009	1,946
2010	1,367
2011	1,276
2012	1,246
2013	1,911
2014	1,017
2015	1,017
2016	960

2016 TOTAL PINS APPEALED	
GOVERNMENTAL	647
RELIGIOUS/CHARITABLE	313
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>960</b>

# 2016 TAX YEAR OUTREACH EFFORTS

Through the BOR's community outreach programs, the BOR brings assessed valuation complaint services to the community. During the 2016 assessment year, our office conducted 153 outreach events and serviced thousands of taxpayers throughout Cook County. The main focus is to educate and inform taxpayers of the BOR's services and to explain the assessed valuation appeal process. Our outreach programs have proven to be a viable and effective way to provide the community with important information and to provide access to this office.

The BOR is fortunate to have the continued support for our respective outreach initiatives from elected officials and community organizations throughout Cook County. The BOR has partnered with several elected officials and community organizations whose support has played an integral role in making the BOR more accessible to taxpayers.



## DID YOU KNOW? BOARD OF REVIEW

**422,449**

PINS FILED

**87%**

PINS FILED ONLINE

**91%**

OF WHICH CREATED  
AN ONLINE ACCOUNT

The BOR is administered by

### **THREE COMMISSIONERS**

who are *elected* from individual districts.

The chairmanship of the *BOR rotates among the three Commissioners* every year.

2016 tax year marks the

### **SIXTH TIME**

since tax year 1977 that the  
second installment tax bills have been

**MAILED OUT ON TIME.**

The BOR is especially well equipped  
to assist taxpayers because of the

### **MULTILINGUAL STAFF**

and documentation. We are currently able to assist taxpayers in

*Albanian, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Romanian,  
Serbian, Spanish, Polish, Punjabi, and Yoruba.*

## DID YOU KNOW? COOK COUNTY

**1.8 M**

PARCELS OF PROPERTY  
IN COOK COUNTY

**5.2 M**

RESIDENTS IN  
COOK COUNTY

**1,635**

SQUARE MILES

### **THE HISTORIC ROUTE 66 BEGINS IN CHICAGO**

at Grant Park on Adams Street in front of the Art Institute.

If Cook County were a state it would be

### **TWENTY-THIRD LARGEST IN POPULATION**

greater than **MINNESOTA** and just smaller than **SOUTH CAROLINA.**



# CCAO TRIENNIAL ASSESSMENT CYCLE

