

# State of Wisconsin\Government Accountability Board

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## **2012 Election Administration Major Achievements**

(Strategic Achievements from a Historic Year in Wisconsin's Election Administration)

1. **Administered Six Successful Statewide Elections:** The Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) administered a historic number of statewide elections during the 2011-2012 cycle which required extensive preparations by G.A.B. staff. The G.A.B. worked in conjunction with our 1,851 municipal clerk partners, 72 county clerk partners, and over 30,000 other local election officials to successfully conduct six elections statewide. In addition, the G.A.B. also provided administrative guidance to local election officials for local and special elections.
2. **2012 Recall Process:** The G.A.B. successfully reviewed approximately two million petition signatures for the Recall of the State's Governor, Lieutenant Governor and four State Senators during 2012. This detailed, highly public profile and time-sensitive task was a huge and complex undertaking with no model available to address the scope of this responsibility. Operating policies, procedures and standards had to be developed for the quality assessment and successful review and analysis of the 2012 Recall Review Process. This task was performed under the scrutiny and watchful eye of an interested and curious public via a video feed that was available worldwide.

To further assist the public in accessing information about more than 2 million signatures on the recall petitions, the G.A.B. IT staff developed an online petition search web portal. Through this portal, members of the public could easily search the database of all names certified on the recall petitions. This widely used public application was nominated for a statewide award.

The G.A.B. also conducted and assisted in several other local recalls including a mayor, town board chairs, town board supervisors, and two sanitary districts. Additionally, special referendum elections were conducted at the local level.

3. **Voter Photo Identification (ID) and Other Legislative Changes:** The G.A.B. implemented 2011 Wisconsin Act 23, the Voter Photo ID Bill, which became law on June 9, 2011 and fully effective with the February 21, 2012 Spring Primary. Act 23 was a sweeping change to the State's election administration. From making presentations to the Legislature starting in January 2011 until the bill became law on June 9, 2011, through a team approach, G.A.B. staff implemented a comprehensive strategy that included the development of educational materials and tools for administering the Voter Photo ID Law. To educate the public about this significant change, the G.A.B. launched a statewide media education/informational campaign which included television ads, radio spots, and print media. The theme of this public campaign was "Bring it to the Ballot."

The G.A.B. also provided administrative guidance to local election officials and members of the public on major legislative changes to election law. Some of the notable changes included:

- **Act 227:** Legislative change limiting persons who have completed an absentee ballot from voting at the polling place.
- **Act 115:** Legislative change to county and municipal canvassing procedures, provisional ballot information, recount petition deadlines, and more.

- Act 75: Legislative change that moved the date of the Presidential Preference Primary and the Partisan Primary election to ensure time for military and permanent overseas voters to cast their ballots.
4. Implementation of the 2012 Decennial Census Results (Redistricting): The G.A.B. implemented the Wisconsin State Legislature's new district boundaries. Administration of the new districts included a complete update of the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) to include mapping tools to assign voters to their respective districts. The new districts were implemented in SVRS using these tools which allowed clerks immediate access to the new districts.
  5. Development of a Comprehensive MyVoteWisconsin Website: For the first time, Wisconsin voters can use the G.A.B.'s voter portal to answer basic questions about their voter registration status and generate a voter registration form that can be signed and delivered to their local municipal clerk. All data gathered on the website is fed directly into SVRS and electronically accessed by local election officials. This new workflow allows for more efficient and accurate registration information without the need to hand-key voter registration forms. The system automatically adjusts the instructions applicable to the voter based on registration deadlines and provides voters with the municipal clerk to send or hand-deliver their form to. Voters can use this system 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.
  6. Compliance with the Federal MOVE Act Consent Decree: The G.A.B. worked with the U.S. Department of Justice to ensure that Wisconsin's military and permanent overseas voters were able to receive absentee ballots in a timely manner, in accordance with the 2009 Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act, which requires at least a 45 day transit period prior to an election in which a Federal Office is on the ballot. The G.A.B. ensured absentee ballot deadlines for these voters were met through a series of required reports and surveys of all municipal and county clerks. Surveys were completed before the April 2 Presidential Preference Primary, the August 14 Partisan Primary, and the November 6 Presidential and General Election. G.A.B. reported these findings to the U.S. Department of Justice. Four reports were required before each election with three of those reports necessitating responses from all 1,851 municipal clerks. The G.A.B. also effectively intervened in specific cases to facilitate voting by military and overseas voters.
  7. G.A.B. Awarded a Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Competitive Grant: The G.A.B. was successful in preparing a \$1.9 million nationally competitive grant application that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Defense, Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) and formally received on March 5, 2012. Grant funds enabled the State to provide significantly improved customer services to the State's military and overseas voters, by supporting the development of an Online Absentee Ballot Delivery System for these electors. This new system allows military and overseas voters to access their voter information and an absentee ballot on their own schedule with immediate turnaround. These improvements facilitate the State's capacity and ability to serve our military and overseas voters more efficiently and effectively. The online absentee ballot delivery system also enables Wisconsin to comply with the Federal MOVE Act and with the 2011 Wisconsin Acts 45 and 75 regarding the Presidential Preference Primary and the Partisan Primary.
  8. Improved Mechanism for Delivering Effective Education and Training Programs to Clerk Partners: The G.A.B. utilized new webinar software to conduct election administration training sessions, host teleconferences and develop educational modules. This allowed G.A.B. staff to provide critical and up-to-date election administration information about current processes and procedures, as well as rapidly changing legislative proposals and new state statutes. Election officials have the option to attend training live or review recorded webinars from our website on-demand at no charge. Using a combination of certified clerk-trainers and live, online webinars, the G.A.B. conducted 25 Municipal Clerk Core training classes for 360 new municipal clerks and staff and 81 Baseline Chief Inspector training classes for 1,990 Chief Inspectors. The webcasts

were posted shortly after each training session as refresher training for municipal clerks and for poll worker training.

In addition, the G.A.B. updated election administration manuals for clerks including: The Election Administration Manual, the Election Day Manuals and the SVRS Manual. How-to videos on various election administration topics were also produced and distributed to local election officials.

9. Improved Services to Voter Customers: The G.A.B. launched and continued development of a comprehensive initiative that focused on improved voter education and technical assistance. The goal of the initiative was to inform Wisconsin electors about important aspect of election law and their rights and responsibilities. Some of the highlights of this initiative to “get the word out” included:
- The use of social media including Facebook and Twitter.
  - Development of voter materials including a reference guide on photo ID, a comprehensive document on election administration legislative impacts, and a voter rights and responsibilities document.
  - Development and implementation of a speaker’s series in which G.A.B. staff gave presentations to voter groups across the state, entitled Voting 101.

In addition, the G.A.B. expanded the use of the Customer Service Center of Excellence to ensure the timely fulfillment of customer calls. During 2012 the G.A.B. Customer Service Desk received over 42,000 incoming telephone inquiries and countless email contacts from clerk partners, elected officials and the voting public. For the 2012 Presidential and General Election, 12,600 call contacts were received between October 7th and November 7th 2012. On Election Day, November 6, 2012, the service desk received 1.6 calls per minute over the course of the 17-hour business day. Inquiries came primarily from local election officials and from the Wisconsin electorate who had questions about registration requirements, registration locations, acceptable proof of residence documents, and other election-related inquiries.

To further meet the needs of Wisconsin electors, the G.A.B. also developed two systems to aid in responding to customers in a more timely and efficient manner. The G.A.B. created a database and application for the improved management of customer complaints and one for managing public records requests.

10. Assistance Rendered to the City of Milwaukee Regarding Section 203 Compliance: The G.A.B. assisted and advised the City of Milwaukee concerning compliance with their Spanish language designation under Section 203 of the Federal Voting Rights Act. G.A.B. facilitated the translation of election administration forms and polling place notices from English to Spanish and created a surname analysis tool to assist the Milwaukee Election Commission in determining their need for bilingual poll workers. G.A.B. staff monitored Milwaukee polling places for Section 203 compliance over the course of three elections in 2012 and provided feedback to the Commission.
11. Election Cost Data Gathered as Part of Elections Statistics: For the first time, the G.A.B. staff worked with Wisconsin’s 1,851 municipalities and 72 counties to collect actual election cost data (not estimates). Cost data was gathered for five statewide elections during 2012. Municipal and county clerks reported cost data in eleven different pre-determined categories for each election. Cost categories include training, ballots, memory devices, programming of equipment, ballot bags, wages for local election officials, staff costs, polling place rental, notices, polling place documents, and miscellaneous costs which clerks are asked to specify. The G.A.B. incorporated the collection of election cost information into its business practices because these data are a

major component for providing a complete reporting on elections results and statistics. In addition, this information:

- Helps municipalities and counties convey the complete cost of conducting election to their respective chief executives, governing boards and voters.
- Assists municipalities and counties in preparing and budgeting for elections.
- Enables the G.A.B. to accurately inform the State Legislature on fiscal impact statements on pending and enacted election-related legislation.
- Enables the G.A.B. to inform the general public about the cost of conducting elections.
- Assists municipalities and counties to predict election costs based on voting trends and projected turnout. Election cost information can also help identify potential cost savings.

12. 2012 Fall Election Strategic Planning Team: To ensure a problem-free 2012 Fall Election cycle, G.A.B. staff developed and launched a comprehensive education and training program for local election officials and voters which focused on the fundamentals of elections and voting in Wisconsin. This “Back to Basics” Campaign supplemented the agency’s ongoing election preparedness effort. In addition to providing routine assistance to our clerk partners and elector customers, the “Back to Basics” initiative resulted in the completion of significant special election preparedness projects in advance of the 2012 August Partisan Primary and November General and Presidential Election. Over 90 new projects were completed in preparedness for the August and November election, including:

- A comprehensive guide for voters and election officials on how to handle electronic forms of proof of residence.
- A guide for handling student residency requirements.
- A voter rights and responsibilities document.

While these documents were created for the August and November 2012 elections, they will be useful resources for election officials and voters in future elections.

13. Election Administration Research/Studies: During the last quarter of 2012, the G.A.B. staff conducted two comprehensive studies on issues that could affect and impact election administration in Wisconsin. Both studies were completed in December 2012.

First, G.A.B. staff researched the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program maintained by the United States Department of Homeland Security (USDHS), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and developed a report that was submitted to members of the Government Accountability Board, and a State Senator that requested researching the SAVE initiative. This report provides the results of this research, as well as recommendations for how the SAVE program could be used in Wisconsin for the purpose of voter registration list maintenance.

In addition, a study was conducted by G.A.B. staff that determined the cost and administrative impact on elections in Wisconsin if Election Day Registration (EDR) was eliminated. This research included a detailed analysis of the fiscal and administrative impact of implementing requirements from the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) if EDR were eliminated in Wisconsin. This report was submitted to members of the Government Accountability Board, the Legislature and the Governor.

14. Ensuring Polling Place Accessibility: Through the agency's AccessElections! Accessibility Compliance Program, accessibility compliance audits were conducted at 895 polling places during the 2012 cycle. A total of 456 municipalities were visited in 27 counties. Tablet PCs were incorporated into the audit process to enhance auditors' ability to conduct audits more efficiently and at a reduced cost.
15. Assessing the Integrity of Wisconsin's Voting Systems: Pursuant to the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and Wis. Stat. § 7.08(6), the G.A.B. ordered the audit of a random sample of each voting system that is currently in use in Wisconsin. One hundred reporting units were selected and notified of the audit requirement. This audit is designed to assess how the electronic voting equipment performed on Election Day by comparing the system's vote totals with the actual ballots cast by voters to ensure the system maintains an accurate tally. These audits are required to be conducted publicly.
16. Increased Use of Technology to Improve Program Efficiency and Effectiveness: In 2012, the G.A.B. Information Technology (IT) team released multiple applications that significantly increased clerk efficiency, resolved previous issues, and supported major initiatives. These IT program initiatives improved the election process for both election officials and voters across the State. Some of the most notable IT improvements include:
  - Upgrade of the Canvass Reporting System: The G.A.B. worked with Waukesha County to develop a reliable process for reporting election night results. The new process worked well and is available for use by all counties and municipalities. The G.A.B. encouraged all county and municipal clerks to consider using the expanded functionalities of the Canvass Reporting System for reporting unofficial election night results.
  - Improved Access of the Ineligible Voter Lists: Beginning with the April 3, 2012 Presidential Preference and Spring Election, the G.A.B. implemented an online system for distributing ineligible lists provided by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. The online system allows municipal clerks to print the required list on demand. A clerk or election inspector may also search the online database instead of printing a paper list. By offering an online system for distributing ineligible voting lists, the G.A.B. now provides the most up-to-date information at a significantly lower cost.
  - Development of a Comprehensive MyVoteWisconsin Website: Please refer back to page 2, item #5.