

# State of Wisconsin\Government Accountability Board

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JUDGE VICTOR MANIAN  
Chair

KEVIN J. KENNEDY  
Director and General Counsel

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Wisconsin County Clerks  
Milwaukee County Election Commission  
Wisconsin Municipal Clerks  
Milwaukee City Election Commission

**FROM:** Michael Haas  
Elections Division Administrator

**DATE:** May 13, 2016

**SUBJECT:** G.A.B. Transition News

As you may have heard by now, there have been recent developments in the transition from the Government Accountability Board to the new Elections Commission and Ethics Commission, and we wanted to make sure local election officials are kept up to date.

First, there have been four members appointed to each of the Commissions, and the appointees are listed here: <http://www.gab.wi.gov/transition>. The remaining two Elections Commission members will be appointed by the Governor from lists of former municipal or county clerks submitted by the Republican and Democratic legislative leadership. The remaining two Ethics Commission members will be appointed by the Governor from lists of former judges submitted by the legislative leadership from each party.

Second, Ethics and Accountability Division Administrator Jonathan Becker has announced his retirement effective May 31, 2016. Jonathan served as legal counsel to the State Ethics Board before being appointed to lead the Ethics Division when the G.A.B. was created in 2008. Public officials and candidates have counted on Jonathan as an expert when addressing issues under the State Ethics Code and lobbying laws, and his knowledge of campaign finance regulations will also be missed.

Third, earlier this week Director and General Counsel Kevin Kennedy announced his retirement from state service effective June 29, 2016. A press release regarding his retirement, with a link to his correspondence to the Government Accountability Board, can be found here: <http://www.gab.wi.gov/node/3939>. Kevin has dedicated over 37 years of service in the areas of election administration, campaign finance, lobbying, and the code of ethics for public officials, most of that time as Wisconsin's chief election official.

State and local election officials over the years have benefitted greatly from Kevin's expertise, leadership and example, and I know that our staff feels fortunate to have worked for and with

one of the country's top election officials. I hope you will join us in congratulating Kevin and wishing him well before the end of his tenure.

Fourth, G.A.B. staff has held orientation meetings with both Commissions so that they start with a foundation of understanding regarding the laws which they will administer and enforce. The meetings were productive and hopefully will assist both Commissions as they start their work. Members of both Commissions are now serving as non-voting members of the Government Accountability Board, permitting them to attend the Board meeting on April 26 as well as the upcoming June 9-10 meeting. The Ethics Commission has initiated its recruiting process to select an Administrator for the agency. The deadline for applications is May 31, 2016, and further information regarding that process can be found at this link: <http://www.gab.wi.gov/node/3944>

Fifth, Director Kennedy and other G.A.B. staff have been working with Department of Administration staff to develop a transition plan which will assist in allocating G.A.B. resources, funding streams, and staff to the two new Commissions. The transition plan will be submitted by DOA to the Joint Finance Committee shortly for its review and approval. The plan anticipates that both Commissions will continue to be located at our present offices, at least through the term of our current lease which expires at the end of 2018.

Finally, late yesterday the Elections Commission appointed me to serve as the Administrator of that agency effective June 30 and for a four-year term. The current four Commissioners made the appointment with the understanding that the full Commission would conduct a review of the appointment following the fall elections. An announcement regarding the appointment can be found here: <http://www.gab.wi.gov/node/3942>

I appreciate the support and well wishes of local election officials which I have received, and I look forward to continuing to work with all of you. As I have mentioned to my G.A.B. colleagues, I believe my appointment reflects not only the Commissioners' desire for some continuity in the management of the elections agency, but also their recognition of the excellent work of the entire staff and their belief that it will continue. Maintaining our positive relationship with local clerks plays a big part in the agency's ability to perform its mission, and your ongoing efforts to conduct elections and perform all of the required preparation and post-election tasks make Wisconsin's decentralized system of election administration work.

Ultimately everything we do at the State level and in your conduct of elections at the local level affects the experience of individual voters in casting their ballots, and ensures that those ballots are counted accurately. I expect that our focus will continue to be on assisting Wisconsin's local election officials, candidates, voters and taxpayers with the high customer service standards established by the G.A.B. Most importantly, I ask that we continue our practice of communicating openly and often so that we may continue to help each other and better serve our customers.

Thank you again for all that you do, and please contact us if you have any questions regarding this information or if we can be of help in any other way.