

State of Wisconsin\Government Accountability Board

212 East Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor
Post Office Box 7984
Madison, WI 53707-7984
Voice (608) 266-8005
Fax (608) 267-0500
E-mail: gab@wisconsin.gov
<http://gab.wi.gov>



JUDGE GORDON MYSE
Chair

KEVIN J. KENNEDY
Director and General Counsel

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 31, 2010

TO: Wisconsin County Clerks
Milwaukee County Board of Election Commissioners

FROM: Nathaniel E. Robinson
Elections Division Administrator
Government Accountability Board

SUBJECT: Government Accountability Board's Canvass Reporting System Protocol
Effective for the September 14, 2010, Partisan Primary Canvass Process

The new Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) Canvass Reporting System Prototype that was unveiled at the Wisconsin County Clerks Association's 105th Annual Training Symposium on June 22, 2010, will be completed for clerks in time to be used for the 2010 Fall Election Cycle. The migration of the canvass process to a web-based, online platform will significantly improve Board staff's administrative efficiency and effectiveness. It is anticipated that this new canvass system will improve accuracy, counties' Boards of Canvassers administrative processes, and it will measurably reduce the number of Board staff and amount of staff time required to certify State and Federal canvass results.

In order for the canvass process to run smoothly, certain standard practices must be adhered to for consistency and compliance with state statutes. These standard practices will also ensure the important effect of reducing County Clerks and Board staff time certifying canvass results. The protocols in this memorandum become effective with the process for certifying the September 2010 Partisan Primary Canvass results.

Background

Using funds received from the \$2 million election data collection grant that was awarded to Wisconsin by the U. S. Election Assistance Administration, the Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) staff worked with Department of Administration/Division of Enterprise Technology (DET) to effectuate changes to the canvass process. DET developed a web-based, online canvass application. The automated canvass process will set the stage for election night reporting.

On Thursday, May 13, 2010, a Clerk Advisory Committee reviewed the new canvass reporting process. The clerks had the opportunity for hands-on exploration, testing and experimentation with the process. All of the clerks in attendance found the new canvass easy to use and were receptive to utilizing it for the Fall 2010 election events. The clerks also thought it would ease the administrative processes at municipal and County Clerk offices.

On Tuesday, June 22, 2010, the G.A.B. Canvass Reporting System prototype was presented at the Wisconsin County Clerks' Association during their 105th Annual Summer Symposium in Shawano. 60 of the 72 County Clerks were in attendance. The prototype was enthusiastically received by all.

Beginning Monday, August 6, 2010, the G.A.B. Canvass Development Team commenced training selected County Clerks on the file transfer function of the new G.A.B. Canvass Reporting System. This first phase of training has gone smoothly and the participating County Clerks in Dane, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha, Brown and Winnebago Counties were able to provide valuable feedback to the G.A.B. Canvass Team about improvements that will make the system even more efficient and effective. Additional training for County Clerks is scheduled before the September 14 Partisan Primary (see accompanying memorandum).

The protocols outlined below become effective with the process for certifying the September 2010 Partisan Primary Canvass. In many cases, the standard policies and protocols described have been in place for many years, but they were not always consistently followed.

Standards

1. Format of Canvass Report

Currently, canvass reports from the counties arrive at the G.A.B. in various electronic and paper formats. Board staff must manipulate the electronic files in order to assemble the results into G.A.B.'s current canvass database, SWEBIS II. Approximately 70% of County Clerks prepare canvass reports manually and spend an inordinate amount of time struggling to assure that the format is correct, particularly in partisan primaries.

Starting with the September 14, 2010, Partisan Primary, all County Clerks are required to use the G.A.B. Canvass Reporting System for reporting official election results. The new online canvass platform provides a uniform canvass format for the County Clerks to use. The online system will reduce errors and mistakes, and eliminate the need for time-consuming manual intervention and follow-up by Board staff.

Starting with the September 14, 2010, Partisan Primary, all County Clerks must use the "Certification Report" from the G.A.B. Canvass Reporting System for the official canvass report. The official canvass report contains three separate sections: The Tabular Statement of Votes Cast; the Summary Statement; and, the Certification with signatures of the members of the board of canvassers. This report assures standard reporting in a format that provides consistency and assurance that voter information entered into the G.A.B. Canvass Reporting System is certified by the appropriate county board of canvassers.

A. Tabular Statement of Votes Cast

The Tabular Statement of Votes Cast is a detail of the number of votes cast for each candidate in each ward or combination of wards for each office or referendum. Write-in votes should be summed together in one scattering column for each office by the County Clerk when reporting federal and state office results. If any votes are rejected, the board of canvassers shall specify the reasons in the minutes of the board of canvassers meeting.

Referendum question results are reported by "Yes" votes and "No" votes. There is no scattering column for a referendum question.

B. Summary Statement

The summary statement is a tally of the Tabular Statement of Votes Cast. Each statement shall include the total number of votes cast in the county for each office; the names of all ballot candidates for each office, the number of votes cast for each candidate in each office, the number of scattering votes cast in each office, and the number of votes cast for and against any question submitted at a referendum.

C. Certification of the Board of Canvassers

The certification is signed by the three members of the county board of canvassers. If corrections must be made to the tabular statement, canvassers should not sign the certificate until the corrections are made in the G.A.B. Canvass Reporting System, the report is rerun and corrections verified by the members of the board of canvassers. The board of canvassers certifies that the results contained in the canvass report are true and accurate, and the certificate includes any corrections made to the report during the canvass meeting.

2. Reporting Units

Currently, County Clerks provide lists of reporting units to Board staff for tedious, manual entry into the legacy election administration application (SWEBIS II) when there is an election for state or federal offices. Wisconsin's 3,600 reporting units are wards or combinations of wards used to identify the group of voters to which votes are attributed.

Like the Wisconsin Election Data Collection System, the G.A.B. Canvass Reporting System uses an import utility to obtain reporting unit information from the SVRS system. It is important that reporting unit information be entered into the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) in a consistent and uniform manner in accordance with the standards listed below.

- A. All wards in a county must be accounted for, even if there is no one living there and no votes will be cast in that reporting unit. This standard requires that every parcel of land in the state be identified with a ward number, and that a particular election is set-up in SVRS to include every ward in the state for that election.
- B. Reporting unit names must identify a ward or combination of wards. Reporting units must not be reported by aldermanic districts. If a reporting unit is a combination of wards that also encompass an aldermanic district, the name of the reporting unit may include the indication such as "Wards 4 & 5 (Ald 1)." At no time may the aldermanic district number come before the ward identifiers in the reporting unit name.
- C. If a municipality is not split by wards, one reporting unit is created in SVRS with the label "Ward 1."
- D. If a municipality has more than one ward but will report results in a single reporting unit, the reporting unit in SVRS is created with a label such as "Wards 1-7."
- E. Ward combinations must be reported sequentially by leading number in the reporting unit name. For example: Wards 1 & 2, 5 – 8 10; followed by Wards 3 & 4, and then, Ward 9.

- F. If a municipality lies in more than one county, a ward number should not be repeated in each county. The wards in a municipality should be sequential, regardless of which county the municipality lies. For example: Ward 1 in County A, Wards 2 & 3 in County B and Ward 4 in County C.
- G. In partisan primaries or elections, reporting units cannot include wards that are in different assembly, state senate or congressional districts.

The G.A.B. Canvass Reporting System provides tools for County Clerks to use to verify that all wards in the county are entered correctly in SVRS, that the reporting unit naming standards are being used correctly and that no reporting unit contains more than one assembly, state senate or congressional district for a partisan primary or election. County Clerks are responsible for working with the municipal clerks in their county to assure that proper standards are being followed.

If you need further information about these standards, please contact the G.A.B. Help Desk at 608-261-2028 or GABHelpDesk@wi.gov.

cc: Kevin J. Kennedy
Director and General Counsel
Government Accountability Board

Barbara Hansen
SVRS Director
Government Accountability Board

Diane Lowe
Lead Elections Specialist
Government Accountability Board