

State of Wisconsin \ Government Accountability Board

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JUDGE THOMAS H. BARLAND
Chairperson

KEVIN J. KENNEDY
Director and General Counsel

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 28, 2011

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

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

SUBJECT: Improved Clerk Communications Protocol

In October 2009, the Government Accountability Board instituted a Clerk Communications Protocol after consulting with clerks around the state. As a result, we have significantly reduced the number of e-mails and eliminated e-mail file attachments. We apprised you that this was a work in progress, and we promised to re-evaluate with your input.

In the summer of 2010, Board staff surveyed all 1,922 county and municipal clerks regarding satisfaction with the October 2009 Communications Protocol. 810 clerks responded and the overwhelming majority – 86 percent – said they were satisfied, highly satisfied or completely satisfied with the protocol. Clerks however, continue to tell us that we are sending them too many High Priority e-mails.

I can assure you, we are listening. We reviewed the number of High Priority messages and we agree with you. Quite frankly, we sent too many High Priority messages in 2010. As a result of your feedback and our analysis, we have tweaked the Communications Protocol that will result a significantly reduced amount of emails sent to all clerks. G.A.B. Director Kevin Kennedy and I have pledge to drastically reduce the number of mass e-mails to clerks. Instead, we will significantly increase use of the agency website for distribution of information that clerks need to do their election administration job.

We respect you as professionals. As such, we will defer to your responsibility to check the Recent Clerk Communications Page on the G.A.B. website for information about routine clerk tasks. Elections and SVRS specialists will still contact individual clerks about specific issues as needed, and this policy does not affect those contacts.

Effective immediately, you will receive two types of mass e-mails from the Elections Division. We will send High Priority e-mails only when we must notify you of a new, time-sensitive, and critical task that clerks must complete by a specified date. An example is the memorandum giving guidance to clerks on complying with the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act, which was new last fall. In such cases a brief, High Priority e-mail will go out advising clerks to visit the website for detailed instructions.

The second type of e-mail clerks will receive from the Elections Division is a bi-monthly, friendly reminder to check the website. Whenever the situation warrants, these e-mails may briefly summarize recent communications posted to the website, as well as highlight upcoming deadlines and events, such as an SVRS milestone that will be checked in the near future. At other times, they will just be reminders to check the website.

All other Clerk Communications will be posted only to the website. They will no longer be classified as Low or Medium Priority. Instead, they will be classified more descriptively.

In the absence of e-mails reminding you about each and every task, I encourage you to regularly consult and familiarize yourself with the G.A.B.'s [Calendar of Election and Campaign Events](http://gab.wi.gov/publications/2010-2011-calendar) (<http://gab.wi.gov/publications/2010-2011-calendar>), which provides a day-by-day guide to the statutorily-required election administration tasks that clerks must complete. We urge you to follow that calendar, and we will let you know when something unforeseen arises.

As always, we welcome any and all feedback as we continue to work on improving our communication, which we recognize is a key link to our committed partnership with valued county and municipal clerks. We appreciate your patience and your usual cooperation. Thank you.

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