

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 TIMOTHY L. VOCKE
Chairperson

KEVIN J. KENNEDY
Director and General Counsel

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 12, 2013

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

FROM: Michael Haas
Elections Division Administrator

SUBJECT: 2013 Spring Election Wrap-Up and Thank You

All counties have submitted their official Spring Election canvass reports to the G.A.B., and we expect to certify winning candidates for state-level offices soon (one circuit court judge election is subject to a recount). As you know, Wisconsin has experienced a nearly continuous cycle of elections since the spring of 2011 and we are all looking forward to a bit of a break so that we can attend to other necessary tasks in anticipation of next year's elections, including implementation and training for any new election legislation adopted this Legislative Session. Before we begin to move on, I wanted to take a minute to say thank you and to acknowledge all of the work that was done and is being done by local election officials, election inspectors, and our staff to prepare for and administer the Spring Election, and to complete required post-election tasks.

Thank you to each and every poll worker who has been asked to put in extra time not only to conduct numerous elections over the past two years, but also to learn new procedures and rules as the result of constantly changing election laws. While it is the prerogative of the Legislature to change the Statutes, one of the messages we try to convey to elected officials is that it is a challenge to complete necessary education and training for 72 counties, 1,852 municipalities, and up to 30,000 poll workers whenever the election laws change, especially in the midst of election preparations.

All of us understand that change is a constant, but regardless of the merits of any particular proposal, we can all relate to the desire to simply keep the same basic rules in place for one election cycle. We value the service and work of every poll worker who puts in long days and whose service and contribution to our democracy sometimes may be overlooked by the general public. Please pass along the thanks of the Government Accountability Board and its staff to them.

Thank you also to each county and municipal clerk and election commission staff member. We appreciate your patience, perseverance, and attention to detail. Whether you lead a municipality that is large or small, urban or rural, we recognize that you handle countless election-related

duties, sometimes under stressful circumstances and with unique challenges. You may be serving a voting population that is outsized compared to your available staff; you may be a part-time clerk with a separate full-time job and without easy access to the resources and technology needed to complete tasks in the Statewide Voter Registration System and to conduct elections; you may be struggling to retain experienced poll workers and recruit enough new ones, or you may be subject to alternate language requirements that use even more staff and create additional hurdles for recruiting qualified bilingual election inspectors. Every challenge is unique, but we hope you find some support and encouragement from your colleagues and our staff.

I can also assure you that the G.A.B. and its staff appreciate the key roles and many different responsibilities of municipal and county clerks within their organizations. We know that you may be juggling license applications, meetings of your governing body, personnel management, property tax collection, budgeting, and many other duties in addition to election preparations and administration. As a former municipal attorney I was fortunate to work with (and be trained by) some talented and hard-working city clerks, and that helps me to appreciate the mission that our agency shares with all of you to serve the voters and the public.

Finally, I know many of you have excellent relationships with our staff and I want to publicly acknowledge their work as well. Thinking back over just this spring election cycle, I have been impressed but not surprised with their dedication and professionalism. Our role in the process has included reviewing nomination papers for state candidates; shepherding the set-up of the February and April elections in SVRS which included many contacts with individual clerks; conducting SVRS training around the state during three weeks in March; continuing to deal with the ramifications of redistricting for clerks and specific voters, especially regarding sanitary districts, many of which held their first elections since redistricting; troubleshooting issues so that MyVote Wisconsin sample and absentee ballots were correct; managing hundreds of accessibility audits over two elections while following up on last year's accessibility audits; and responding accurately and quickly to questions of voters and election officials leading up to and on Election Day.

During the same time period our staff completed the Election Day Registration report to the Legislature; collected 2012 General Election data and submitted various federal data reports; completed the first phase of working with the Clerks Concerns Task Force; conducted voting equipment testing, clerk training and webinars; prepared materials for our March Board meeting; and implemented technology changes and developed the postcard mailing for the Four-Year Voter Registration Maintenance, among other tasks. I appreciate and am proud of the effort and volume of work that Elections Division staff has completed during the first quarter of this year.

I also do not take for granted that many of you, as well as our staff, have adjusted personal schedules and altered vacation plans over the last two years and on each Election Day. We recognize the outside pressures that might be caused by partisan divisions or by local issues and political disputes. We appreciate the patience and professional work ethic exercised by so many local election officials and poll workers to ensure that those pressures do not interfere with the fair, impartial, and orderly conduct of elections. We have all endured criticism of some sort over the past two years and received very little thanks. Congratulations on a job well done, and on behalf of the Government Accountability Board and the voters of Wisconsin, thank you for all that you do. We value and respect your dedication and commitment.

As a final note, you may know that we have lost some excellent staff members to other opportunities over the course of the past couple of years. We are currently in the process of filling a number of vacant positions so that we can get back to full staff as soon as possible. We are looking forward to finishing up Spring Election tasks and working with all of you to focus on other significant projects without the need to immediately prepare for another statewide election. Please feel free to contact me or our staff if we can be of any assistance.

CC: Kevin J. Kennedy
Director and General Counsel

Government Accountability Board Members