

State of Wisconsin \ Government Accountability Board

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KEVIN J. KENNEDY
Director and General Counsel

DATE: April 10, 2012

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

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

SUBJECT: Additional Information about the GAB-190

Once again, thanks to those who contacted us regarding the GAB-190 form. On March 26, 2012, the GAB-190 was amended to comply with changes in Wisconsin laws, legislative requests and to address increasing public and interest.

It is our long-established practice to involve and include clerks' advice and counsel whenever developing policies and procedures that affect clerks' "election lives." As you know, we have established ad-hoc clerk advisory committees; we have offered online surveys, teleconference calls, WisLine calls and webinars in order to solicit clerks' feedback. In addition, we regularly meet with the two clerks associations, i.e. the Wisconsin Municipal Clerks Association and its District members as well as the Wisconsin County Clerks Association, during which time we always ask for suggestions and recommendations on ways in which we (G.A.B. staff) can improve and be an even more effective partner.

It is Director Kennedy's and my commitment to continue the practice of ensuring clerks' involvement and inclusion in the election administration policy-making process. Regarding the cost of elections data added to the GAB-190, regrettably, we literally ran out of time and did not have the opportunity to request clerks' feedback. We were waiting to see if the SB-271 (deals with additional absentee balloting procedures) and SB-386 (deals with the elimination of SRDs in high school) would pass and be signed by the Governor, and if either of these bills/laws would have any impact on reporting requirements that affected the GAB-190. By Monday, March 26, we simply could not wait any longer to see if the Governor signed SB-271 and SB-386; we had to distribute the GAB-190. It is unfortunate that we were unable to engage in our usual conversations and collaboration with clerks on this matter.

Due to the fact that the revised GAB-190 Form was distributed later than planned, indeed, we are sensitive to the fact that clerks did not have as much time as we would have liked for them to plan for providing these costs. As such, we will be flexible regarding the reporting of cost information for the April 3 Spring Election. Please note the following:

1. Amending the GAB-190 Form to report costs of elections was chosen because the GAB-190, the “Election Voting and Registration Statistics Report” is specifically required by statute (see below in #2) and therefore, was deemed to be the best “vehicle” for obtaining this information.
2. As a friendly reminder, we are making the request for data on the costs of elections in accordance with Wis. Stat. § 5.05(14). “Information from County and Municipal Clerks.” The board may request information from county and municipal clerks relating to election administration, performance of electronic voting systems and voting machines, and use of paper ballots in elections. Local election officials are required to provide information requested under § 5.05 (14) to the Board upon request. Wis. Stats. § 7.10 (10), 7.15 (13).
3. Election costs are to be reported on the GAB-190 only for what your municipality actually paid, and only for statewide elections.
4. We recognize that clerks may encounter challenges determining exact costs by the 30-day statutory reporting deadline; however, we are asking that you provide us with the best available information. For example, if you are waiting on a final invoice, please provide the information on the bid statement that your municipality received/accepted. Or, you may have to contact the vendor to determine costs. We encourage you to be as proactive as possible in recording and reporting the best available cost information.
5. We are working on providing additional details on how (what to include and in what time periods, etc.) to best report each of the cost budget line items, including training and staff time costs. This help guide will be distributed by Monday, April 16, 2012.

It is important for us to reiterate that our evaluation of this GAB-190 process will be dynamic and ongoing. As we move forward, and in accordance with our usual best practice of including and involving clerks, clerks’ feedback will be solicited on how all information on the GAB-190 may be improved. We will also provide summary information to clerks in a timely and user-friendly format that will help clerks educate their respective local governing boards and the public about the actual costs of running elections.

Finally, I am pleased to introduce a new G.A.B. staff member whose primary responsibility will be to manage all election statistics and voter participation data for the Government Accountability Board. His name is Brian Bell. Effective immediately, Brian should be contacted for all matters relating to the GAB-190, WEDCS and related election statistics and voter participation data. He may be reached at (608) 261-2011, or brian.bell@wisconsin.gov.

Once again, thank you for your comments, understanding and patience. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

cc: Kevin J. Kennedy
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Ross D. Hein
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Brian M. Bell
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