

State of Wisconsin\Government Accountability Board

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Government Accountability Board's Statement on **The Integrity of My Vote Wisconsin**

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The *My Vote Wisconsin* website (<http://MyVote.WI.gov>) features a new online absentee ballot delivery management tool that facilitates a more efficient and effective service to our military and overseas voters. It also has a new online voter registration tool that saves a voter's information in a pending status until the printed and signed original form arrives in the municipal clerk's office, which eliminates data entry issues.

Preserving the integrity of Wisconsin's voting procedures was a top priority throughout the design and development of the *My Vote Wisconsin* site. The use of this tool will be continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure that its integrity is maintained. *My Vote Wisconsin's* absentee ballot request function builds on the security features of the current absentee request process in a number of ways. For example:

1. Under current law, a military voter is not required to register to vote. Wis. Stat. § 6.22(3). An absentee voter also need only make a request for a ballot in writing to receive an absentee ballot. Wis. Stat. § 6.86(1). In contrast, to use *My Vote Wisconsin*, a voter must submit not only their name, date of birth, residential address, and mailing address; but they must also submit the last four digits of their Social Security number and their email address.

In addition, as with any paper voter registration or absentee application, *My Vote Wisconsin* requires the individual to certify that they are a qualified elector, and falsification of the information provided is punishable as a felony. Wis. Stat. §§ 12.13(3)(g) and (i).

2. *My Vote Wisconsin* logs the IP address of every computer used to access it. If a clerk suspects that a fraudulent application has been submitted (for instance, because the individual lists a different driver's license number or last four digits of a Social Security number than is already on file for that voter), it would be possible to attempt to trace that IP address to reveal the identity of the perpetrator. In addition, the clerk could flag a suspicious ballot to be challenged at the polls.
3. Each certification generated by *My Vote Wisconsin* and signed by the voter includes a unique identifying number created by the system which is recorded on the absentee ballot log by the clerk. This allows the election official at the polls to verify that each ballot they receive is linked to a particular voter. If a voter generates multiple ballots, the previous ballots are automatically recorded as spoiled by the system and the clerk is notified to reject these ballots if they are received. This is consistent with the current practice where an

absentee elector may request up to three ballots by spoiling their current ballot and requesting a new one.

4. Data generated by *My Vote Wisconsin* can be easily audited. Because the system tracks all voter registrations and military/overseas absentee ballot applications, and issues ballots electronically, it is possible to maintain constant watch over the output of the system for irregular activity. A system log is maintained that allows the G.A.B. to undo any potentially fraudulent submission and restore the original voter information. This audit log serves as a valuable resource for potential prosecutions.
5. Voter registration applications submitted through *My Vote Wisconsin* must still be ultimately approved by the municipal clerk. The clerk receives email notifications of all activity conducted by voters in their municipality through *My Vote Wisconsin*. The clerk can review the information provided by the voter before the ballot is even returned and investigate any suspicious submissions in preparation for challenging that ballot at the polls if it appears the ballot was obtained fraudulently.

My Vote Wisconsin also ensures a more efficient and effective service to our military and overseas voters. With *My Vote Wisconsin*, a military voter can provide their identifying information, request an absentee ballot, and receive their ballot, all in the same online session. No longer must our fighting men and women submit an absentee application and hope it arrives while they still have mail or Internet access. Sixty-two percent of Wisconsin's municipal clerks are part-time and there are some clerks whose municipalities lack the necessary technological resources to transmit an absentee ballot electronically. This means that for a majority of municipalities it may be days before a clerk receives the absentee request and could get the ballot sent to the voter.

As we know from our past experience in 2010 and 2012, while the majority of municipal clerks do send out absentee ballots in a timely fashion, there is a small number who have failed to transmit absentee ballots on time. As a result, municipal clerks across the entire state have had their actions intensely scrutinized by the United States Department of Justice (US DOJ) for compliance with the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act and are subject to burdensome reporting requirements from the current Federal court Consent Decree. *My Vote Wisconsin* provides a valuable backstop for those municipalities that might otherwise be subject to litigation from US DOJ for failure to comply with the MOVE Act.

For the reasons stated above, *My Vote Wisconsin* offers security advantages that are equal to and in some cases are greater than were previously available under traditional voter registration and absentee ballot request procedures. *My Vote Wisconsin* is another option that the G.A.B. provides to assist our local election officials and voters, and we are confident that clerks and voters will find that this new technological tool is secure and efficient.

Any clerk may choose to opt out of *My Vote Wisconsin*'s absentee ballot delivery function and require that military and permanent overseas voters obtain ballots directly from the clerk's office. If a clerk decides to opt out of the ballot delivery system, voters from that jurisdiction will see a message stating that an absentee ballot will need to be obtained from the clerk's office.

Questions, comments or reports of suspicious activity or misuse of *My Vote Wisconsin* should be directed to the G.A.B. Help desk at (608) 261-2028, toll-free at (866) VOTEWIS (866-868-3947), or by email at GABHelpDesk@wi.gov.

