

State of Wisconsin \ Government Accountability Board

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 16, 2015

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

FROM: Michael Haas
Elections Division Administrator

Meagan McCord Wolfe
Elections Voter Services Specialist

SUBJECT: Clean-up of Expired Military/Overseas Absentee Ballot Requests

A recent survey of the SVRS system found that there are many Military and Permanent Overseas voters (UOVACA) who received an absentee ballot for the November 2014 General Election despite having an expired absentee ballot request. Absentee ballot requests are only valid for one year for Military, Permanent Overseas, and Regular voters. **These voters must submit a new request for each year or election.** You cannot send an absentee ballot to a Military, Permanent Overseas, or Regular voter based on a request from a previous year.

Background and Clarification

Absentee Ballot Requests are only valid for one calendar year for Military, Permanent Overseas, and Regular voters.

For example, if a military or permanent overseas voter requested absentee ballots in 2014, they can only receive ballots for elections that occur in the 2014 calendar year. The voter will need to submit a new absentee ballot request if they would like to receive absentee ballots in 2015.

The only voters who can continue to receive absentee ballots automatically, every year, are indefinitely confined voters. Indefinitely confined voters are only those who cannot get to the polls because of age, illness, infirmity, or disability. These are the only voters marked as "permanent" in SVRS. Military and Permanent Overseas voters should not be marked as "permanent" in SVRS.

Action for Clerks

We have separated the following action items into Steps 1-2 for clerks who use SVRS to track their absentee ballots and Steps 1-2 for clerks who do not use SVRS and instead use their own absentee ballot log. All clerks should use the same final Step 3. Please follow the instructions that apply to you below.

If you use SVRS for maintaining absentee applications, follow these instructions:

Step 1 – (SVRS Users) Run a report

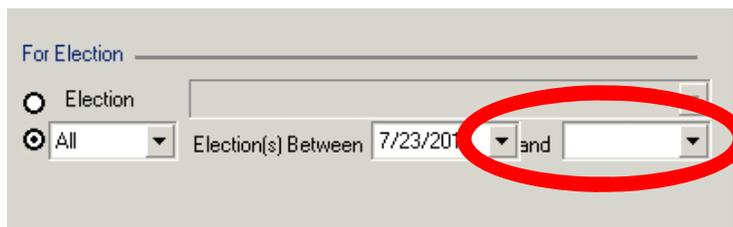
Find out if any of your voters have an expired absentee request, run a report following the attached instructions (**Attachment A**). The report contains a list of voters whose absentee application was received prior to January 1, 2015, have an application currently in the “Approved” status, and whose application was entered without an end date (this means they will continually receive a ballot for every election).

Step 2 – (SVRS Users) Review the list

Next you will need to analyze your list to determine which absentee ballot requests have expired. Use the following guidelines to review the list and update the voter information in SVRS.

Prioritize your actions as follows:

- a. Begin with voters whose Application Type is Military, Overseas, and Regular voters (as listed on the report).
 - i. In the Absentee Application node in SVRS, search for the Military, Overseas, or Regular voter by name.
 - ii. Open the Absentee Application
 - iii. Enter 12/31/2014 as the end date under the For Election section of the application



- iv. Click Quick Tasks at the top of the Absentee Application form



- v. On the Quick Tasks panel, select Process Absentee Application. Choose the Status-Reason: Cancelled – Administrative Action, then click Process
 - vi. Send a letter to the voter informing them of the expiration of their absentee application (see instructions below)
- b. For voters whose Application Type is Permanent, review the absentee ballot request (whether the voter submitted their request by GAB-121 form or in some other format). If the voter did **not** check the box or otherwise indicate that they are an indefinitely confined voter, follow the directions above (as if the Application Type were Military, Overseas, or Regular). (**TIP:** One way to prioritize this portion of the list is to begin with voters whose vote location is something other than SVD Facility or the voter address is not one associated with a known care facility.)

Step 3 – (All Clerks) See below.

If you do not use SVRS for maintaining your absentee applications, follow these directions:

Step 1 – (No SVRS) Review your list of absentee applications.

Any voters who have not indicated they are indefinitely confined and who have not submitted an absentee ballot request since January 1, 2015, should be removed from your list of voters who will receive absentee ballots in upcoming elections.

Step 2 – (No SVRS) Make Corrections to your Absentee Log

Review your list of indefinitely confined voters and compare with the voters' requests for absentee ballots to confirm the indefinitely confine box was checked on the GAB-121 or the voter otherwise indicated that they fit that category. If the voter did not indicate that they are indefinitely confined on their absentee ballot request, they should not be listed as permanent and will need to make a new absentee ballot request for each calendar year/election they wish to vote in.

Step 3- All Clerks

Step 3- (All Clerks) Customize and send attached letter to voters who are effected by the change.

You will now need to notify the Military and Permanent overseas voters whose absentee ballot request has expired, to let them know they will need to submit a new request if they would like ballots for 2015. Customize and send the attached letter (**Attachment B**) to the Military and Permanent Overseas voters whose absentee request you are ending. Please mail, email, or fax the letter to the voter based on the means you normally communicate with the voter.

Once the letter has been sent to the voter, you will not need to take any further, immediate action.

If you receive a new absentee ballot application from the voter, then you will enter that application into SVRS and/or your absentee ballot log. When entering a new absentee ballot request, be sure to also enter an expiration date for the request. For example, if you receive an absentee ballot request for the 2015 calendar year, you will enter an expiration date of 12/31/2015.

Some voters who receive the letter may no longer be active military personnel, or their permanent overseas status may have changed. If the voter's status has changed, they will need to register to vote with their new information before they can be sent an absentee ballot.

Summary

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. It is very important that we maintain correct data in SVRS. This will help to ensure that absentee ballots are only sent to voters with current, valid, absentee ballot requests on file. If you have any questions, please contact Meagan Wolfe at Meagan.Wolfe@wi.gov or at (608) 266-8175.