

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

212 E. Washington Ave., Third Floor ▪ Madison, WI 53703 ▪ gab@wi.gov ▪ (608) 266-8005 ▪ Help Desk (608) 261-2028 ▪ <http://gab.wi.gov>

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Reid Magney, 608-267-7887

G.A.B. Requests \$250,000 for Voter Photo ID Public Education Campaign

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board has asked the Legislature to release \$250,000 in funds for a statewide TV, radio and online campaign to educate voters about the voter photo ID law.

“We need to remind voters to bring their IDs to the polling place before the Partisan Primary in August and the Presidential Election in November,” said Kevin Kennedy, Wisconsin’s chief election official. “We also need to let people know how they can get a free state ID for voting, even if they don’t have their birth certificate.”

“The campaign’s message is that most people already have the ID they need to vote,” Kennedy said. “If they don’t have one, they can get a free ID for voting at the DMV, even if they don’t have some documents like a birth certificate.”

The campaign is designed to raise awareness and encourage the public to go to a website (BringIt.Wisconsin.gov) or call 866-WIS-VOTE (866-868-3974) to learn more about what IDs are acceptable and how they can get a free ID if they need one for voting. The campaign’s TV and radio ads, short videos and printable brochures are available on the website. The videos are also available on the YouTube and Vimeo websites.

The “Bring It to the Ballot” multimedia ad campaign needs funding to get on the air and online, said Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B. TV and radio ads were distributed to Wisconsin stations to run as unpaid public service announcements in February. The agency has no funding for the campaign because the voter photo ID law was on hold in the courts at the time the current fiscal year budget was submitted in September of 2014. The U.S. Supreme Court cleared the law in March 2015, but the Legislature did not add photo ID campaign funding before passing the budget in July of 2015.

State law permits agencies to request supplemental funding from the Legislature for unbudgeted expenses. (§ 13.101(4), Wis. Stat.) The G.A.B.’s funding request was submitted late Tuesday to the Joint Committee on Finance, which has not yet scheduled its quarterly meeting. “If the committee acts expeditiously, the new Wisconsin Elections Commission should be able to educate voters early enough to make sure they have the ID they need to vote,” Kennedy said.

The funding request includes two alternative media plans designed to inform Wisconsin voters – especially those who are less likely to have an acceptable photo ID. The campaign would begin in July and run through the November election, but is intended to reach voters in the summer months before the airwaves and online ad spaces fill up with political ads in the fall.

The G.A.B. is proposing that final details of the campaign would be approved by the new Wisconsin Elections Commission, which takes over for the G.A.B. on June 30.

A copy of the detailed funding request is available with this news release on the G.A.B. website: www.gab.wi.gov/news. Broadcast-quality copies of the videos are available from Dropbox: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/c1earn0rjhld1de/AABG8rMmPN9xg9kduoaK784va?dl=0>.

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