

# Government Accountability Board

## State of Wisconsin

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
May 23, 2012

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## Absentee Voting Update

MADISON, WI – Tens of thousands of Wisconsin residents are already taking advantage of absentee voting for the June 5 recall election, according to the Government Accountability Board.

As of today, at least 90,000 absentee ballots had been issued by Wisconsin's local election officials who track them using the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS). A total of 68,000 absentee ballots were tracked in SVRS for the May 8 recall primary. Just over one-third of municipalities track absentee ballots in SVRS, including all the state's large cities.

"These numbers confirm anecdotal reports we are hearing from local election officials that there is strong interest in absentee voting," said Kevin J. Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B.

In-person absentee voting in the clerk's office started Monday morning and runs through 5 p.m. Friday, June 1. Some clerks are offering extended hours to handle demand.

Because of the tight timelines between the May 8 primary and the June 5 recall election, some clerks may not have had the official ballots printed in time for the start of in-person absentee voting. Those clerks must provide substitute ballots, which are remade by election inspectors at the polling place. Some voters have objected to not receiving an official ballot, but Elections Division Administrator Nat Robinson said the practice is standard, and voters should be assured that these ballots will be counted.

The deadline for voters to request an absentee ballot by mail is 5 p.m. Thursday, May 31. Absentee ballot applications in English, Spanish and Hmong are available on the G.A.B. website (<http://gab.wi.gov/forms/voters>), as well as from municipal clerks.

Military voters and those who are indefinitely confined due to age, disability, infirmity or illness may request absentee ballots by 5 p.m. Friday, June 1. Hospitalized voters and sequestered jurors must request ballots by 5 p.m. on Election Day. All absentee ballots must be postmarked by Election Day, and received by 4 p.m. Friday, June 8 in order to be counted.

The G.A.B. and municipal clerks around the state continue to receive complaints about absentee ballot mailers sent out by political parties and interest groups because they also contain campaign messages. The return mailer comes with the address of the voter's local municipal clerk, to

whom the request must be sent. This has led many people to wrongly assume that the clerk is responsible for the mailer, Kennedy said.

While some of these mailers are not official absentee ballot request forms, they are permissible, and clerks must honor voters' requests for absentee ballots made using them, Kennedy said.

There have been media reports of groups providing transportation to clerks' offices for in-person absentee voting, with some commentators claiming such voting may be fraudulent. Under state law (Wis. Stat. sec. 12.11(3)(d)) it is permissible to transport voters to the clerk's office for absentee voting or to the polling place on Election Day for voting.

Wisconsin voters must be registered to receive a ballot. Those who are not registered must provide acceptable proof of residence to register. While the state's photo ID law has been enjoined by the courts, other provisions in Wisconsin Act 23 remain in force, expanding the residency requirement from 10 to 28 consecutive days and ending the practice of "vouching" for people registering to vote who do not have acceptable proof of residence.

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The Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) is responsible for administration and enforcement of campaign finance, elections, ethics and lobbying laws in Wisconsin. The G.A.B. is made up of six non-partisan, former judges and is supported by an agency of non-partisan staff members.