

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
December 1, 2011

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Joint Statement on Recall Petition Complaints

MADISON, WI – The Government Accountability Board and the Wisconsin Department of Justice are working together with district attorneys around the state to investigate allegations of recall petition fraud and acts of aggression by or against people involved in the recall process.

Today, G.A.B. and D.O.J. staff conducted a webinar for district attorney's offices on investigating recall-related complaints. Under Wisconsin law, the G.A.B., the D.O.J. Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), local law enforcement and district attorneys may investigate alleged election crimes, but prosecution is the responsibility of district attorneys. The D.O.J. will assist district attorneys as needed in appropriate cases.

The G.A.B. and the D.O.J. have set up a joint clearinghouse for recall-related complaints to ensure all complaints are reviewed and assigned to the proper local jurisdiction. Complaints should be directed to the G.A.B.

“In the last several weeks, we have seen reports of everything from threats to citizens for refusing to sign recall petitions to intimidation of petition circulators to destruction of recall petition to false signing of petitions,” said Kevin J. Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B. “We take these allegations seriously, and prosecutors and law enforcement will be treating acts of aggression and violence the same as they would any non-election crime.”

“A passionate recall campaign does not give people license to break the law,” Kennedy said.

“We have laws to protect the integrity of the election process and we stand ready to enforce those laws,” Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen said.

It is a Class I felony in Wisconsin to destroy, deface or otherwise commit fraud with a recall petition, punishable by up to 3½ years in prison and up to a \$10,000 fine.

Today's webinar covered the background of Wisconsin's constitutional right to recall officials, as well as applicable state statutes, and the roles of the G.A.B. and district attorneys. It also covered types of recall complaints: acts of aggression, circulating on private or public property, defacing or destroying recall petitions, falsifying information on a recall petition, use of public resources, personnel issues and multiple signing.

Persons with complaints about recall petition activities may file a complaint at the G.A.B. website: <http://gab.wi.gov/complaints>, or may call 608-261-2028.

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The Government Accountability Board is responsible for administration and enforcement of campaign finance, elections, ethics and lobbying laws in Wisconsin. The board is made up of six non-partisan, former judges and is supported by an agency of non-partisan staff members. Additional information about the mission of the Government Accountability Board is available by telephone at **608-266-8005**, by electronic mail at **gab@wi.gov**, or through the Internet at **<http://gab.wi.gov>**.