

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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Recall Petition Update 6

Madison, WI – The Government Accountability Board today received challenges from all four State Senators against who recall petitions have been filed. As soon as possible, copies of the challenges will be posted to the Board’s website: <http://gab.wi.gov>. Copies of correcting affidavits filed by the recall committees with the petitions have also been filed.

State law gives the recall petitioners five days to rebut the challenges, after which the officeholders will have two days to reply. Those challenges, rebuttals and replies will be used by the G.A.B. staff to make recommendations to the Board about whether the petitioners filed a sufficient number of signatures to trigger recall elections. Dane County Judge Richard Niess has given the Board until March 19 to determine the sufficiency of all petitions.

Under state law, the G.A.B. is not able to accept challenges directly from members of the public or third-party groups. Anyone who finds irregularities in petitions should contact the officeholder who is the subject of the recall petition. Officeholders must provide sworn affidavits as part of any challenge to document first-hand knowledge that a petitioner's signature is not valid. While several media outlets and other organizations are analyzing the petitions and releasing their own findings, the Board cautions that accurate conclusions regarding the number of valid signatures cannot be made until a full evaluation of the information submitted by both sides during the challenge process.

The Board has been getting phone calls and emails from people complaining that they have received post cards or other contacts from officeholders asking them whether they signed recall petitions. Officeholders who are subject to recall petitions have the right to take steps to determine whether signatures are legitimate so they can determine whether to file challenges. In the past, some officeholders who were subject to recall petitions also made extensive use of telephone banks to call petition signers.

“The electoral process is the means our society has chosen to select leaders, establish public policy and hold public officials accountable without resort to intimidation or violence,” said Kevin Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B. “While individuals with an interest in vetting these petitions have every right to do so, we expect that they will continue to do so in a respectful, lawful manner. All Wisconsin residents ought to agree that we can ensure the rights of individuals to participate in the political process without endangering their safety or giving up their right to personal security.”

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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.