

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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Voter Turnout Estimated at 60 to 65 percent for June 5 Recall Election

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board is predicting that between 60 and 65 percent of the voting age population – or approximately 2.6 to 2.8 million people – will cast regular and absentee ballots for the Tuesday, June 5 Recall Election.

“Wisconsin has never had a statewide recall election, which makes predicting turnout difficult,” said Kevin Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B. “We typically look at history for guidance in predicting turnout. We expect turnout for this election to be much higher than the 49.7 percent turnout in the 2010 General Election for Governor, but not as high as the 69.2 percent turnout in the 2008 General Election for President of the United States.”

Historically, the highest voter turnout in a November gubernatorial election in the last 50 years was 52.4 percent in 1962. The highest turnout in the past decade was 50.9 percent in 2006. Wisconsin’s 2011 voting age population is 4,352,762 people. Statistics on past voter turnout and current voter registration are available at <http://gab.wi.gov/elections-voting/statistics>.

The number of Wisconsin residents who have already requested absentee ballots or voted absentee in the clerk’s office for the recall election continues to climb, said Elections Division Administrator Nat Robinson.

As of noon today, at least 130,391 absentee ballots had been issued by Wisconsin’s local election officials who track them using the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS), compared to 113,558 by midday Friday, May 25, Robinson said. Clerk’s offices in some larger cities were open for in-person absentee voting over the Memorial Day weekend.

To give that number some context, 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.

There were a total of 230,744 absentee ballots cast in the November 2010 General Election for Governor, and a total of 633,610 cast in the November 2008 General Election for President. These numbers include all ballots, not just those tracked in SVRS, and included an extra week of absentee voting.

As many as 75 percent of all absentee ballots are typically cast in the clerk's office, with the remainder being delivered by mail. The percentage of voters voting via absentee ballot jumped from about 6 percent in 2000, to about 12 percent in 2004, to more than 21 percent in 2008, then dropped to 10 percent in 2010.

In-person absentee voting in the clerk's office runs through 5 p.m. or the close of business on Friday, June 1, whichever is later. Some clerks are offering extended hours to handle demand. Voters can find their local clerk's office address and phone number on Voter Public Access: vpa.wi.gov.

The deadline for clerks to receive a request for an absentee ballot by mail is 5 p.m. Thursday, May 31. Voters who request an absentee ballot using a flier they received in the mail should double check the clerk's mailing address in the event of an error, Kennedy said.

Mailed absentee ballots must be postmarked by Election Day, and must be received by the clerk by 4 p.m. the Friday after the election. All properly-cast absentee ballots will counted, regardless of how close the election is.

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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.