

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Voter Turnout Estimated at 3.1 million

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Elections Commission is predicting that 3.1 million people will cast ballots for the Tuesday, November 8 General Election. That’s 69.6 percent of Wisconsin’s 2016 voting-age population of 4,449,170, according to Census estimates.

“We project turnout will be similar to the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, which was 2,996,869 (69.2 percent) and 3,080,628 (70.4 percent),” said Michael Haas, Wisconsin’s chief elections official. “We typically look at history for guidance in predicting turnout. We expect turnout for this election to be similar to previous presidential elections.”

Even though absentee voting has been growing in popularity, it is not necessarily an indicator of higher overall turnout, Haas said. As of Thursday morning, 623,503 absentee ballots had been returned to municipal clerks for counting on Election Day. In 2012, 659,444 absentee ballots were counted, compared to 639,913 absentee ballots counted in 2008. Comparable pre-election numbers of absentee ballots cast are not available because clerks were not required to track them using the state’s system as they are now.

Historically, the highest voter turnout percentage in a November presidential election in the last 50 years was 72.9 percent in 2004. The highest number of voters to participate in a presidential election was 3,080,628 in 2012. Statistics on past voter turnout and current voter registration are available at <http://elections.wi.gov/elections-voting/statistics>.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission calculates election turnout as a percentage of the voting-age population, not as a percentage of registered voters. Wisconsin had 3,558,877 registered voters on November 2. Some local election officials may report turnout based on voter registrations because those numbers are readily available to them. The WEC advises news organizations comparing state and local turnout numbers to take that information into consideration. Local voting-age population estimates are available from Wisconsin’s Demographic Services Center: <http://www.doa.wi.gov/divisions/intergovernmental-relations/demographic-services-center/estimates>.

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The Wisconsin Elections Commission is responsible for administration and enforcement of election laws in Wisconsin. The Commission is made up of six Commissioners – four appointed directly by the State Senate

Majority Leader, Speaker of the Assembly and the Minority Leaders in the State Senate and Assembly. The remaining two Commissioners are by the Governor with confirmation by the State Senate from lists of former municipal and county clerks submitted by the legislative leadership in each party.