

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Turnout 22.2% in April 3 Spring Election

MADISON, WI – Very few problems were reported in Tuesday’s Spring Election in which more than 22 percent of Wisconsin adults voted, according to preliminary results analyzed by the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

“Even though there was a snowstorm over some parts of the state and higher than normal turnout in other parts, the Elections Commission received very few complaints about problems at polling places,” said Meagan Wolfe, Wisconsin’s chief election official.

Unofficial results indicate there were at least 995,454 votes cast in the Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice race, which is 22.27 percent of the state’s voting-age population of 4,469,475 residents. That is slightly higher than the average of 21.5 percent turnout for similar Supreme Court elections since the year 2000. Historically, turnout in contested Spring Elections for Supreme Court Justice ranges from a high of 34.3 percent in 2011 (*Kloppenborg v. Prosser*) to low of 18.2 percent in 2009 (*Koschnick v. Abrahamson*).

The Elections Commission has until May 15 to certify results of the Spring Election.

Wolfe said the Elections Commission staff logged nearly 600 calls from clerks and voters and more than 300 emails. “There were no noticeable trends in the questions we received and they can mostly be classified as standard Election Day assistance, such as helping voters to find a polling location,” Wolfe said.

E-Poll Book Pilot Successful

In addition to administering the election Tuesday, WEC staff also conducted successful pilot tests of Wisconsin’s new Badger Book electronic poll book system in five locations around the state. Poll workers used the system to check in and register more than 5,000 people to vote at polling places in the cities of Beloit, Brookfield, Mequon and Sun Prairie and the town of Trenton.

“Clerks told me they were very pleased with how the e-poll books performed and with how easily their poll workers and voters were able to navigate the hardware and software,” Wolfe said. “I think the success of this pilot is one we can be particularly proud of as it truly represents a partnership between local election officials and the state working toward a common goal to improve elections in Wisconsin.”

Based on data gathered at the pilot locations, WEC staff will make further improvements to the system before making the software available for free to any municipal clerk in Wisconsin who wishes to use it for elections in August and November. Municipalities will be responsible for purchasing the necessary hardware computer tablets or dedicated point-of-service terminals.

Supplemental Poll Books Worked Well

The WEC received no complaints Tuesday about voters needing to reregister at the polls because their names had been inadvertently removed from the active voter list.

The Commission approved the use of a supplemental poll book in response to problems at the February 20 Spring Primary, when some voters were required to reregister due to problems with a new process designed to identify voters who had moved.

“If a registered voter’s name was not on the regular poll list, poll workers looked for them on the supplemental poll list,” said Wolfe. “If their name was there, they received a ballot after signing the supplemental poll list affirming that their address had not changed.”

Wolfe said WEC staff will now reach out to clerks around the state to learn more about their experience with the supplemental poll list so they can begin to develop a plan for the fall elections.

More information about supplemental poll books is available on the Commission’s website: <http://elections.wi.gov/node/5746>.

Other Election Day Issues

- WEC staff monitored the weather situation throughout the day Tuesday with the assistance of Wisconsin Emergency Management and any impacted clerks as needed. Wolfe said the Commission received very few calls from clerks about weather issues.
- The City of Milwaukee had what they described as a “false alarm” related to a suspicious package at a polling place. Initially, they thought they may need to evacuate the polling place and then ask a court to extend voting hours, but the City later determined that would not be necessary.

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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.