

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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Recounts for the August 12 Partisan Primary

MADISON, WI – There were several close races in Tuesday’s Partisan Primary Election that could result in recounts, said Kevin Kennedy, director and general counsel of the Government Accountability Board.

“The G.A.B. is watching unofficial results and will consult with county clerks about official canvass and potential recount procedures,” Kennedy said.

There is a Recount Manual on the G.A.B. website that explains the process in detail: <http://gab.wi.gov/manuals/recount>. In addition, here are some frequently asked questions about the official canvass process and recounts:

Are all the ballots in?

No, absentee ballots that are postmarked by August 12 have until 4 p.m. on Friday, August 15 to arrive in the municipal clerk’s office. That deadline also applies to provisional ballots which voters may rectify by providing required documentation. Because Wisconsin has Election Day voter registration, very few provisional ballots are cast. Municipal clerks are required to post the number of absentee and provisional ballots which were outstanding as of Election Night. The G.A.B. does not have a centralized count of those outstanding ballots for a particular election.

When will official canvass results be available?

- The municipal boards of canvassers must complete their work by 4 p.m. on Monday, August 18.
- They immediately report results to the county clerk, who convenes the county board of canvassers.
- The county boards of canvassers must begin their work by 9 a.m. on Tuesday, August 19. They can usually finish their work within a day, but county clerks must report their canvass statement to the G.A.B. by the close of business on Friday, August 22. The Board will certify the state canvass of any state and federal elections for which no recount petition is filed no later than August 27.

Are recounts automatic if a race is close?

No. A losing candidate must request a recount.

When can a candidate request a recount?

State and federal candidates cannot request a recount until all the counties in a district have reported official canvass results to the G.A.B. The deadline for reporting is Friday, August 22.

How long do candidates have to request a recount?

State and federal candidates have until 5 p.m. on the third business day after the last county in a district reports results to the G.A.B. to request a recount. If all county canvasses in a particular district are reported to the G.A.B. on Tuesday, August 19, the deadline for a recount petition will be 5 p.m. on August 22.

How soon does the recount start?

The G.A.B. notifies county clerks of any recount petition filed by a state or federal candidate and issues a recount order. The clerk has until 9 a.m. on the second day after receiving the notice to convene the county board of canvassers. If that date is a Saturday (or holiday) the G.A.B. recommends that the county board of canvassers begin the recount on the Saturday (or holiday).

How much does the requesting candidate pay for a recount?

The cost depends on how many votes were cast and the margin between the top two candidates. When there are more than 1,000 votes cast for the office, there is no fee if the margin is less than or equal to 0.5 percent. Between 0.5 and 2 percent, the candidate requesting the recount pays a fee of \$5 per ward. If the margin is more than 2 percent, the candidate who requests the recount pays the actual cost.

Where are recounts conducted?

The county board of canvassers conducts recounts for county, state and federal offices. In a multi-county district, a losing candidate can request a recount in one, some or all of the counties. Recounts in all counties occur simultaneously.

When do recounts have to be finished?

Recounts must be completed as soon as possible but, for state and federal offices, no later than 13 days from the date of the G.A.B.'s recount order. A candidate may file an appeal to circuit court within 5 business days of a recount determination by the G.A.B. Recount results are not certified until either the expiration of the appeal period or the conclusion of any court challenge.

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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.