

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 28, 2014

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Turnout Estimated at 12 percent for April 1 Election

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board is predicting voter turnout of 12 percent for the Spring Election on Tuesday, April 1.

Wisconsin’s voters will choose among 5,981 candidates for 3,794 state and local offices, as well vote in 101 different local referenda.

“While there is no statewide race on the ballot Tuesday to draw greater attention to this election, Spring Elections are the people’s chance to have their say about local government and schools,” said Kevin Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B. “These local officials and referenda can have a significant effect on people’s taxes and the quality of life.”

Local races include elections for three court of appeals judges, 39 circuit court judges as well as many county board supervisors, mayors, village presidents and school board members.

Other local referenda range from advisory questions about nonpartisan redistricting and legalization of marijuana in Dane County to cutting the pay and benefits of Milwaukee County Board supervisors.

To find out which candidates and referendums they will see on the ballot, voters should visit the MyVote Wisconsin website: <http://myvote.wi.gov>. Registered voters can put in their name and date of birth to see their record and what is on their ballot. Voters planning to register at the polls on Election Day can use the Address Search feature to find their polling place and see sample ballots for their city, village or town. A complete list of races, candidates and referendums will be posted soon as an attachment to this news release on the G.A.B. website: <http://gab.wi.gov/node/3174>.

Elections Division Administrator Michael Haas reminded voters who plan to register on Election Day to bring an acceptable proof of residence document with them. “You can use a current and valid Wisconsin driver license or identification card that has your current address,” Haas said. “But there are many other kinds of documents that work as well, including property tax bills, utility bills, bank statements and paychecks.” A full list of acceptable documents is available here: <http://gab.wi.gov/publications/voter-guides/proof-of-residence>.

In-person absentee voting – also known as early voting – in the clerk’s office ended at 5 p.m. or the close of business on Friday, March 28. Absentee ballots cast by mail must be postmarked by Election Day and received in the clerk’s office by Friday, April 4 to be counted.

Polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. on Election Day. Haas reminded voters and clerks that the G.A.B. will be open for extended hours for the election. On Friday, March 28 and Monday, March 31, the agency will be open until 6 p.m., and on Election Day from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Voters can call 1-866-VOTE-WIS (866-868-3947) or 608-261-2028.

Commenting on the turnout projection, Kennedy said: “The last Spring Election with no statewide races was in 2010, and turnout was 13 percent of eligible voters. We expect this year’s turnout to be slightly less than that.”

In comparison, turnout in April 2013 with statewide races for Supreme Court and Superintendent of Public Instruction was 20.45 percent. In April 2011 at the height of the Capitol protests, turnout was 34.3 percent. Turnout at the November 2012 Presidential Election was 70.1 percent.

Wisconsin has an estimated voting-age population of 4,400,015 adults. Voter turnout and current voter registration statistics are available at <http://gab.wi.gov/elections-voting/statistics>.

Kennedy also reminded voters not to take photos at polling places or of their ballots. “Cell phone cameras and social media make it so easy now for people to take pictures or video of their daily lives and share them online,” Kennedy said. “However, the polling place and your ballot are off limits for these activities.”

With the exception of news media covering the election and disability advocates documenting compliance with accessibility laws, no one is allowed to take photographs at a polling place because it can be disruptive, Kennedy said. And under Wisconsin’s election fraud law, it is a Class I felony to intentionally show your marked ballot to any person.

Kennedy explained that the law against showing your ballot was designed to ensure people are not getting paid for how they vote. If taking pictures of ballots were permitted, it would open the door to people being paid for how they vote, which would undermine people’s confidence in the outcome of elections, he said.

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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.