

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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Absentee Voting Update

MADISON, WI – With early voting completed and mailed absentee ballots still coming in for the November 4 General Election, more than 289,000 absentee ballots have been cast so far, according to the Government Accountability Board.

Of the 289,615 ballots recorded through noon Monday, November 3, there were 216,361 early votes cast in clerks' offices and there were 73,254 ballots cast by mail or other absentee voting methods. There were 16,537 absentee ballots issued that had not yet been returned. "Ballots cast" means ballots completed and returned to the municipal clerk's office. Those ballots are stored securely and then counted on Election Day at the polls or an alternate location.

"We have easily surpassed all absentee voting for the 2012 recall," said Kevin J. Kennedy, Wisconsin's chief election official. In June 2012, there were 153,854 in-person (early) absentee votes and 265,427 total absentee votes. Early voting was October 20 to 31, not including the weekend.

Last week, Kennedy projected that 2.5 million Wisconsin residents – or 56.5 percent of eligible voters – will vote in the 2014 General Election, which would be a record for a November gubernatorial election. Turnout in the June 2012 recall was 2,516,371 voters, or 57.8 percent. Historically, the highest voter turnout in a November gubernatorial election in the last 50 years was 52.4 percent in 1962.

Kennedy said 289,000 absentee votes would be 11.5 percent of 2.5 million votes, which is in the range of absentee votes for gubernatorial elections. Absentee voting in the 2010 gubernatorial election and the 2012 recall election was 10.5 percent. The percentage of absentee votes in the last two presidential elections was 21.5 percent.

Kennedy cautioned that the absentee numbers released are partial and preliminary. Out of Wisconsin's 1,852 municipal clerks, about 360 use the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) to track absentee ballots. However, those are the state's larger municipalities, which cover 69 percent of Wisconsin's voters.

The G.A.B. also released a spreadsheet of absentee ballots recorded by municipality. The spreadsheet contains more than the roughly 360 municipalities that track all absentee ballots in SVRS. A few hundred clerks use SVRS to track only their military and overseas absentee ballots, not regular absentee ballots.

Because of changes in election law moving the primary election date and changing the time period for in-person absentee voting in clerks' offices, direct comparisons between these preliminary

numbers and preliminary numbers from previous elections are difficult. Also, the number of clerks who track absentee ballots in SVRS has changed over time. Clerks tracked about 43 percent of absentee ballots in SVRS for the 2008 Presidential and General Election, compared to nearly 67 percent during the 2012 Gubernatorial Recall Election.

Here are some historical numbers of absentee ballots cast in recent elections:

Election Date	Total Voters	Turnout	Total Absentee Votes	Absentee Votes in Clerk's Office
11/6/2012	3,080,628	70.4%	664,597	514,398
6/5/2012	2,516,371	57.8%	265,427	153,854
11/2/2010	2,185,017	49.7%	230,744	122,712
11/4/2008	2,996,869	69.2%	647,175	NA

Statistical reports filed by clerks in 2008 did not break out the number of absentee votes cast in-person in the clerk's office.

Elections Division Administrator Michael Haas reminded voters that the deadline to mail absentee ballots back to the clerk is Election Day, November 4. Ballots must be postmarked by Election Day and received in the clerk's office by 4 p.m. Friday, November 7 to be counted.

Haas offered these reminders for voters going into Tuesday's election:

- There is no early voting over the weekend or the Monday before Election Day.
- Polls open at 7 a.m. on Tuesday. To avoid lines, avoid peak times first thing in the morning, over the lunch hour and after work.
- Polls close at 8 p.m. If you are in line to vote at 8 p.m., you will be able to vote.
- To find your polling place and see what will be on the ballot, go to <http://MyVote.wi.gov>.
- If you need to register to vote for the first time or to update your registration due to a change in name or address, consider filling out the voter registration application form online at MyVote. The website will give you a filled-out form you can take to the polling place, which will save time and effort for you and poll workers.
- Remember to bring a proof of residence document with you if you are registering on Election Day. It must have your current residential address, and it can be a driver license or state ID card, a recent utility bill or bank statement, a paycheck stub, a property tax bill or residential lease. A full list is available here: <http://gab.wi.gov/publications/voter-guides/proof-of-residence>.

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