

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

212 E. Washington Ave., Third Floor • Madison, WI 53703 • gab@wi.gov • (608) 266-8005 • Help Desk (608) 261-2028 • <http://gab.wi.gov>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 28, 2010

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Reid Magney, 608-267-7887

Accountability Board Reminds Election Observers of Rules

MADISON, WI – The Government Accountability Board reminds election observers that there are rules to follow at the polls on Election Day.

“Election observers have been an important part of the election process in Wisconsin for many years,” said Kevin Kennedy, Wisconsin’s chief election officer. “Outside observers act as watchdogs to help assure voters of an open and transparent election process.”

Any eligible voter has the right to watch the public aspects of the election process at the polls on Election Day and during the official canvass which follows. The only exception is the candidates, who may observe only after the polls close.

In the past, some voters have confused observers with election officials at the polling places, so in 2008, the G.A.B. issued a new set of rules for observers to follow at the polls. Under the rules, observers must meet with the chief election inspector, sign in, and wear name tags so voters can easily distinguish observers from election officials. In 2010, the only change in the observer rules is that members of the news media are no longer required to get permission from the chief inspector before taking video or still pictures in the polling place, though they must still check in with the chief inspector.

In addition to assuring transparency in elections, one of the many roles of election observers is to challenge voters if they have personal knowledge that someone is not eligible to vote, and there has been buzz in the news media about alleged organized efforts to challenge voters at the polls. There are strict rules for challenges, which are available on the G.A.B.’s website.

“Our rules have the force of law, and also help voters understand the role that observers play in the election process,” said Nat Robinson, G.A.B. Elections Division administrator. “It is important for voters to know their rights, which is the best weapon against frivolous challenges.”

“Election officials at all of the 2,834 polling places in Wisconsin have been working hard to prepare for November 2,” Kennedy said. “Implementing these rules for observers is just one of the steps we have taken to make sure every voter’s experience will be positive, and that every vote will count.”

For more information on the new rules for election observers or other election information visit the G.A.B. website at <http://gab.wi.gov/clerks/education-training/election-observers>.

###

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.