

# Government Accountability Board

## State of Wisconsin

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## Post-Election Update

MADISON, WI – A record number of Wisconsin voters went to the polls Tuesday for a regular gubernatorial election, according to the Government Accountability Board.

“Unofficial reports show nearly 2.4 million voters cast ballots in this election, and they have spoken,” said Kevin J. Kennedy, Wisconsin’s chief election official. “With the exception of two Assembly races where the winners and losers were separated by less than 100 votes, the margins of victory were outside anticipated recount margins.”

“While 54.25 percent is a smaller turnout than the 57.8 percent in the recall election of 2012, it was still a record turnout for a regular gubernatorial election,” Kennedy said. The previous record voter turnout in a November gubernatorial election in the last 50 years was 52.4 percent in 1962. Turnout is calculated by dividing the total number of ballots cast by the state’s 2014 estimated voting age population, which is 4,416,501. In comparison, turnout in the last two presidential elections has averaged around 70 percent.

According to unofficial election returns compiled by the Associated Press, Wisconsin voters cast 2.395 million votes for governor, with 99 percent of wards reporting. Republican Gov. Scott Walker received 1,252,750 votes, Democrat Mary Burke received 1,115,943 votes, Libertarian Robert Burke 18,289 votes, and Independent Dennis Fehr received 8,981.

The actual number of ballots cast in the election will be slightly higher once local clerks report official election statistics to the Government Accountability Board in the coming month. Last week, Kennedy predicted 2.5 million votes would be cast, a 56.5 percent turnout.

Kennedy thanked the thousands of Wisconsin’s local election officials and poll workers who made the election run relatively smoothly.

“Elections are run by human beings, so there are always going to be a few issues,” Kennedy said. “But there were no major problems Tuesday thanks to the dedication of the 1,852 municipal clerks who conduct elections at the local level, the 72 county clerks who assist them, and the 30,000 dedicated citizens who serve as poll workers on Election Day.”

Kennedy also thanked the G.A.B. staff, which handled more than 1,500 phone calls from voters and local election officials between 6 a.m. and midnight on Tuesday. “Whether they were helping a military voter get an absentee ballot at the last minute or resolving an issue at a polling place, they gave it their all,” he said. “I couldn’t be more proud of everyone around the state who made Tuesday’s election possible.”

“The G.A.B. staff did an incredible amount of work preparing for this election, especially with the on-again, off-again voter photo ID law,” Kennedy said. “We await the U.S. Supreme Court’s final decision on the law, and will be prepared to implement it again if they uphold it.”

Even though Election Day has passed, Elections Division Administrator Michael Haas noted that the election itself is not over. “Clerks will be receiving and counting absentee ballots by mail until 4 p.m. Friday, after which the canvass process begins to certify the official results,” he said.

There is also the possibility of recounts in two close Assembly races:

- District 51 in Southwest Wisconsin, where unofficially, 59 votes separated the top two vote-getters in a three-candidate race.
- District 85 in Central Wisconsin, where unofficially, 86 votes separated the two candidates.

Haas noted that recounts are not automatic in Wisconsin, and the losing candidate must wait to request a recount until the last county board of canvassers in the district has completed its work. The deadline to request a recount is three days after the last canvass is complete. County canvasses must begin by 9 a.m. Tuesday, November 11, and must be complete by Tuesday, November 18. Several county clerk offices will be closed in observance of Veterans Day on November 11 and they may convene their canvass boards the following day. The G.A.B. has until December 1 to certify the election results. Absentee ballots are still coming in. As of Wednesday morning, of the 306,668 absentee ballots issued by clerks who track them in the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS), 294,685 or 96 percent have been returned so far.

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

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

<b>Election Date</b>	<b>Total Voters</b>	<b>Turnout</b>	<b>Total Absentee Votes</b>	<b>Absentee Votes in Clerk’s Office</b>
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.

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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. consists of six non-partisan, former judges and is supported by an agency of non-partisan staff members.