

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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Top 10 Things Wisconsin Voters Need to Know for the April 5 Spring Election and Presidential Preference Primary

MADISON, WI – The Government Accountability Board today released its list of the top 10 things Wisconsin voters should know for the Presidential Preference Primary and Spring Election on Tuesday, April 5, 2016.

The number one thing voters should know is that they must bring an acceptable photo ID to vote.

“Most people already have the ID they need to vote,” said Kevin J. Kennedy, Wisconsin’s chief election official. “Those who don’t have a photo ID still have time to get a free one at the DMV, but they should not delay.”

Acceptable photo IDs for voting include a Wisconsin driver license or state ID card, Veterans Administration health ID card, military ID card, U.S. passport, tribal ID card and some student ID cards. A full list is available at www.BringIt.Wisconsin.gov.

Kennedy reminded voters that the address on their photo ID does not have to match the address on the poll book. “When you show your ID, you are proving your identity, not where you live,” he said. “Voters prove their residence when they register to vote.”

Number two on the list is that voters may only vote for one party’s presidential candidates in the preference primary.

“Wisconsin has had an open primary system since 1905,” Kennedy explained. “Voters do not declare a party, and their ballots contain separate columns with candidates for both major parties, but they may not cross over and vote in both primaries.”

Elections Division Administrator Michael Haas reminded voters that if their municipality has electronic voting equipment, it is programmed to reject ballots with crossover votes. “If you make a mistake and vote in multiple parties, ask a poll worker for a new ballot. You may do this up to three times,” Haas said.

The Presidential Preference Primary and Spring Election ballot also contains a box where voters may indicate a preference for the Democratic or Republican party. It is not necessary to mark this box in addition to casting a vote, but it may be helpful for establishing voter intent in the event the voter accidentally marks candidates in both parties, especially when voting absentee.

Number three is that if voters plan to register for the first time or update their registration with a change of name or address at the polls on Election Day, they must bring a proof of residence document.

“Election Day registration ensures that everyone who is qualified to vote will get to vote,” said Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B. “However, you will need to bring a current proof of residence document with you if you want to register on Election Day.”

To register on Election Day, Wisconsin voters must provide proof of residence, which includes a current utility bill, lease, bank statement or other official government document showing the voter’s name and current address. The document can be paper or on an electronic device like a smartphone or tablet. A list of acceptable documents is available at <http://www.gab.wi.gov/publications/voter-guides/proof-of-residence>. Before Election Day, you must have lived at your current address for at least 28 days to be eligible to vote, but the proof of residence document does not need to be 28 days old. Voters who have a current, valid Wisconsin driver license or Wisconsin state ID card will be required to use their license or ID number to complete the registration form. If a voter does not have a Wisconsin Driver License or State ID number, they may use the last four digits of their Social Security number.

You can also register to vote before Election Day. Registration in your municipal clerk’s office takes place until 5 p.m. on the Friday before the election (April 1, 2016). Remember, you will still need to bring your proof of residence document to register.

Voters who may not be sure whether their registration is current can check their status with their municipal clerk, or on the state’s MyVote Wisconsin website <https://myvote.wi.gov>. My Vote Wisconsin is also a great resource to find your municipal clerk’s contact information, and your polling place.

The remaining Top 10 things voters should know are:

4. Don’t leave the polling place without voting. A voter may cast a provisional ballot if the voter does not have a photo ID, forgets to bring a photo ID to the polls, or if the poll workers do not accept the ID for some reason. A provisional ballot is just like a regular ballot, except that it is placed in a special envelope and is not counted unless the voter returns with an acceptable photo ID. The deadlines for fixing a provisional ballot are 8 p.m. on Election Day at the polling place or by 4 p.m. the Friday after the election in the municipal clerk’s office. Voters who left their photo ID at home can also simply retrieve it and then cast a ballot rather than casting a provisional ballot.

5. You can still vote by absentee ballot. All registered, eligible voters can receive an absentee ballot by mail or in their municipal clerk’s office. You may vote an absentee ballot in your clerk’s office until the Friday before the election (April 1, 2016). Hours vary by municipality. Contact your municipal clerk for the times and location of absentee voting. Please note that due to a recent legislative change you may no longer vote an absentee ballot in the clerk’s office on weekends.

You can also request to receive a ballot by mail. Regular absentee requests must be received by your municipal clerk no later than 5 p.m. on the Thursday before the election (March 31, 2016). There are later deadlines for other types of absentee voters, which are available here:

<http://www.gab.wi.gov/voters/absentee>. To find your municipal clerk's contact information and an absentee ballot request form please visit <https://myvote.wi.gov>. You may send your absentee ballot request to your municipal clerk by mail, email, fax, or delivery. Don't forget to include a copy of your photo ID with your request.

6. Some absentee voters do not need a photo ID. Military and overseas absentee voters and permanent absentee voters in Wisconsin who are indefinitely confined to their homes due to age, disability, illness or infirmity do not need to provide a photo ID to vote. The exception for indefinitely confined voters is an alternative for older voters whose driver license or state ID card may have expired before the November 2014 General Election. More information about the exceptions to the photo ID law can be found at www.bringit.wi.gov.

7. Absentee ballots must be postmarked by Election Day. If you had an absentee ballot mailed to you, it must be postmarked by Election Day and must be received in your municipal clerk's office by 4 p.m. the Friday after the election (April 8, 2016).

8. What to do about problems at the polling place. "If you see voter fraud, voter intimidation, electioneering or misconduct by election officials, your first point of contact should be the chief election inspector at the polling place," said Kennedy. "The chief inspector is the lead poll worker and can usually resolve most polling place issues. But if that doesn't work, you can contact your municipal clerk's office or local law enforcement."

Complaints or issues that are not resolved to the voter's satisfaction should be reported to the G.A.B. Voters can go online and report problems at www.gab.wi.gov/complaints or they can call 1-866-VOTE-WIS.

9. Leave political items at home. Voters should not wear political clothing or paraphernalia to the polling place on Election Day. The chief election inspector may ask voters to leave the polling place if they are judged to be electioneering or creating a disturbance.

10. Election observers must follow the rules. Election observers are welcome at every polling place, but they must obey the instructions of the chief election inspector, and may not interact with voters. Observers who disobey will be asked to leave, and may not observe at other polling places on Election Day. Rules for election observers are available at the polling place and on the G.A.B. website: <http://gab.wi.gov/publications/rules/gab004>

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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.