

State of Wisconsin \ Government Accountability Board

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Dear Interested Parties:

The attached Preliminary Report is the product of extensive research and analysis completed by Government Accountability Board staff regarding the expected impacts and costs if Election Day Registration were eliminated in Wisconsin. At my direction, G.A.B. staff initiated this study in anticipation of possible consideration by the Wisconsin Legislature of amending the Statutes which authorize individuals to register to vote on Election Day or during in-person absentee voting leading up to an election. Subsequently, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau requested that the G.A.B. provide an estimate of the fiscal costs and benefits of eliminating Election Day Registration.

Assessing such costs requires a thorough understanding of the many significant changes in election administration procedures that would result from eliminating the opportunity for voters to register on Election Day. This Preliminary Report will assist in understanding the anticipated impacts and costs, and will contribute to any discussion by policymakers and the public regarding these issues. This report does not focus on evaluating the policy pros and cons of eliminating Election Day Registration, but rather describes the practical consequences on the operations of local election officials, the G.A.B., and other State agencies, as well as the impact on voters.

One of the main impacts is that the Division of Motor Vehicles and several state agencies which provide public assistance and programs to aid persons with disabilities would be directly subject to federal law requirements to offer voter registration services to their customers and clients. That requirement, along with new standards for issuing provisional ballots and for maintaining accurate and current poll lists, would represent a major change in the way that elections and voter registration are conducted.

Our agency will continue and refine our analysis of the anticipated impacts and costs of eliminating Election Day Registration. With the assistance of our partner agencies, we expect to issue a Final Report on this topic by the end of this month. As Wisconsin's chief election officer, I trust that this information is helpful, and I encourage policymakers and other readers of this Report to carefully consider all factors and policy implications that it describes. Please feel free to contact the G.A.B. if you have any questions regarding this Report.

Government Accountability Board

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kevin J. Kennedy'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin J. Kennedy
Director and General Counsel