

State of Wisconsin\Government Accountability Board

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Making Your Vote Count – A Primer for Voters

In Wisconsin, there are three basic methods of voting. 1) Selecting your choices using Touch Screen Voting Equipment, 2) marking your choices on a paper ballot that is hand counted, and 3) marking your choices on a paper ballot that is read by an optical scanner. Depending on where you live, you will see one or more of these methods being used at your polling place. This voting guide focuses on marking optical scan or hand-count paper ballots.

An overview of your ballot

- The ballot will consist of three columns with offices in each column.
- *In most cases the ballot will be two sided.*
- The ballot is divided into five categories:

Statewide
Congressional
Legislative
County
Referendum

All ballots throughout Wisconsin will contain the following:

The statewide offices of

Governor and Lieutenant Governor
Attorney General
Secretary of State
State Treasurer

The county offices of

Sheriff
Clerk of Circuit Court

The office of Representative in Congress

Statewide Referendum Question

A Constitutional Amendment relating to:
Creation of a department of transportation,
creation of a transportation fund, and deposit
of funds into the transportation fund.

The legislative office of

Representative to the Assembly

In addition, some ballots may also contain:

The legislative office of

State Senator (Odd-numbered Senate Seats)

Local referenda questions

Various county, municipal or school district
referenda

The county offices of

The office of Coroner (in counties who elect
a Coroner, rather than hire a medical
examiner)

Tips for Marking Your Ballot

1) Read the ballot instructions

If you aren't sure what something means or you have other questions, be sure to ask an election inspector (poll worker) for assistance.

2) Use the pencil or marking pen provided.

Optical scanners have a sensor that reads your ballot and records your votes. The sensor is able to read your ballot by detecting a mineral, usually carbon, left by the writing instrument you used to mark your ballot. Using the pencil or marking pen provided will ensure the scanner will read your ballot correctly.

While you are free to mark your ballot with something other than what is provided, if the scanner cannot detect the marks it will reject the ballot as being blank. In order for the ballot to be read and accepted by the scanner, the election inspectors are required to copy your votes onto a new ballot using an acceptable marking device. The original ballot is preserved, and the remade ballot is put through the optical scanner

3) You may vote for only one candidate in each office.

With the exception of the office of Governor/Lieutenant Governor, you may choose only one candidate or write in one candidate for each office. Each office will also offer the opportunity to write in a candidate rather than voting for a ballot candidate.

4) For the office of Governor/Lieutenant Governor you may only vote for candidates on one ticket.

Generally a candidate for Governor runs in tandem with the candidate for Lieutenant Governor. However, a candidate for Governor is not required to have a running mate. When voting for the offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor, you may choose the candidate or candidates on one ticket only, and cannot mix and match two candidates from different parties. Or, you may use the write-in lines to write in candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor whose names do not appear on the ballot.

5) Review your choices carefully.

Each candidate in each office will have an arrow, oval or square next to their name. Each office will also offer the opportunity to write in a candidate rather than voting for a ballot candidate. Properly indicating the candidate of your choice will ensure vote is counted as intended.

6) Mark your ballot so that there is no doubt about your choices.

Depending on where you live in Wisconsin, your ballot may instruct you to "make an X in the square," "fill in the oval" or "connect the arrow." Whichever the method, always make your selection obvious. When voter intent is not obvious, the election inspectors must make a determination of voter intent.

- Clearly mark an X in the box next to the candidate of your choice when voting a hand-count paper ballot.
- When marking an optical scan ballot, fill in the oval completely or carefully connect the head and tail of the arrow next to the candidate of your choice.
- Do not circle the arrow or oval, rather than filling in the oval or connecting the arrow.

- Do not make a checkmark or X on the oval or arrow, rather than filling in the oval or connecting the arrow.
- When writing in a candidate, write the name legibly.
- Avoid making extraneous marks on your ballot.
- If you make a mistake, do not try to erase the error. Ask the inspectors for a replacement ballot. (You may receive only receive 2 replacement ballots.)

7) Pay attention to the navigational cues at the bottom of each column (“Continue voting at top of next column”) and instructions to “Turn the ballot over to continue voting.”

8) Review your ballot before placing it in the optical scanner or ballot box.

Make sure you have voted in all offices and for all referenda you want to, and that your choices reflect your intent.

The Government Accountability Board and your local election officials want your ballot to count and your voting experience to be pleasant. If you have any questions or encounter any difficulties, please speak to an election inspector (poll worker) at your polling place.