

# Wisconsin Elections Commission

## State of Wisconsin

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## More Than 69,000 Absentee Ballots Already Returned for May 12 Special Election

MADISON, WI – More than 69,000 voters in Wisconsin’s 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District have already returned their absentee ballots for the Special Election on May 12, according to the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

As of Friday morning, 110,921 absentee ballot applications have been reported received by municipal clerks in the district, which covers all of 21 Northern Wisconsin counties and portions of another five. Those clerks also report sending 107,644 ballots and receiving 69,472 back.

It’s important to note that these numbers do not include absentee ballot requests that have not yet been entered into the state system by clerks, meaning the actual numbers are higher. Because of the rural nature of the 7<sup>th</sup> CD, there may also be some delays in data entry in the state’s system because many small-town clerks rely on their county clerks for this task.

Daily absentee ballot reports, including county-by-county numbers, are being posted here: <https://elections.wi.gov/publications/statistics/absentee>.

Meagan Wolfe, Wisconsin’s chief elections official, urged voters to return their absentee ballots as soon as possible to ensure they are received by the deadline of 8 p.m. on Tuesday, May 12.

“We want everyone’s vote to count,” Wolfe said. “If you are concerned the post office may not get your ballot to your clerk’s office in time, please make arrangements to drop your ballot off at your clerk’s office or at the polling place on Election Day.” Wisconsin law allows voters to have another person deliver their absentee ballot to the clerk’s office or polling place as an alternative to mailing.

Wolfe also encouraged voters who have not already returned their absentee ballots to make sure the return envelope is signed and properly witnessed. Witnesses are required to sign the envelope and provide an address, and if either is missing, the ballot cannot be counted.

Voters heading to the polls on Tuesday are encouraged to double-check their polling place location at <https://MyVote.wi.gov> or by contacting their municipal clerk’s office. While no large-scale polling place reductions are planned, some clerks with multiple polling places may be consolidating them simply because this is a special election and they anticipate a lower voter turnout.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission, working with the State Emergency Operations Center, has distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitizing supplies to all clerks in the district. Voters should follow instructions at the polling place to practice safe social distancing.

Wisconsin National Guard members will be deployed to some polling places in the district where clerks have identified shortages. As they also did in April, these National Guard members will serve as community members at polling places in their home counties in plain clothes. Approximately 250 Guard members have been activated, though about 125 will be initially assigned to polling places, with the remainder in reserve or supporting roles in the event of last-minute shortages.

Wolfe said it is difficult to know what these absentee ballot reports might indicate about turnout in the May 12 Special Election. “We normally estimate turnout by looking at recent similar elections, but in this case, there are few good comparisons available,” she said.

Congressional District 7 has approximately 420,500 registered voters, meaning somewhat more than 25% of registered voters have requested absentee ballots so far. For April 7, approximately 1.23 million requests were made by the state’s 3.38 million registered voters, or 36%.

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The Wisconsin Elections Commission is responsible for administration and enforcement of election laws in Wisconsin. The Commission is made up of six Commissioners – four appointed directly by the State Senate Majority Leader, Speaker of the Assembly and the Minority Leaders in the State Senate and Assembly. The remaining two Commissioners are appointed by the Governor with confirmation by the State Senate from lists of former municipal and county clerks submitted by the legislative leadership in each party.