

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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WEC Releases Analysis of November 2020 Election Data

MADISON, WI – The people of Wisconsin overcame challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic for the November 2020 General Election, voting in record numbers with few problems, according to a data report released today by the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

“Wisconsin voters, clerks and poll workers have much to be proud of,” said Meagan Wolfe, administrator of the WEC and the state’s chief election official. “Thousands of election officials across the state worked countless nights and weekends to deliver a well-administered election despite the challenges of an ongoing pandemic, a battle against election misinformation, and a heightened level of scrutiny which often unfairly villainized them for simply doing their jobs.”

Wolfe said that despite the success of the election, there is still room for improvement. “This is especially true when it comes to public understanding of how things like absentee voting work and how we ensure the integrity of the vote.”

“The concerns expressed by many residents after the election suggest election officials should continue to seek greater transparency, simplicity and clarity in election processes,” Wolfe said. “Sharing data openly, as we do with this report, is one step toward that goal.”

The bipartisan Wisconsin Election Commission will discuss the report at its meeting on Wednesday, February 3. A copy of the report and information about the meeting are available on the commission’s website: <https://elections.wi.gov/node/7305>.

Wolfe said the remarkable data contained in this report represents the labor of tens of thousands of volunteer poll workers, and election officials in every town, village, city and county in Wisconsin.

- Nearly 3.3 million Wisconsin residents voted in the General Election – representing more than 72% of the state’s voting age population of 4,536,417.
- Voter registrations climbed by 11.9% from 3,406,952 on July 1 to 3,811,193 on December 1.
- Clerks in nearly every town, village, and city in Wisconsin processed more absentee ballot requests than ever before – nearly 2 million statewide.
- The statewide absentee ballot rejection rate was exceptionally low in November – 0.2% statewide compared to 1.8% in April 2020.
- Of the 216,490 absentee voters who claimed status of indefinitely confined, 79.6% have provided an acceptable photo ID to receive a ballot since 2016.

- In-person voting on Election Day more than tripled between April and November, which required election officials to manage both the increase in absentee voting and prepare for high in-person voter turnout on November 3.
- Wisconsin voters used a new absentee ballot tracking system on the MyVote Wisconsin website more than 1.5 million times.
- Wisconsin Elections Commission staff responded to over 300 calls and emails per hour on Election Day.

Despite these superlatives, this report does not conclude that the 2020 General Election was without difficulties or room for improvement. The massive increase in by-mail absentee voting this year revealed public confusion about the process and differing opinions about previously obscure statutory provisions and administrative procedures. More than a quarter-million Wisconsin voters chose to certify they were indefinitely confined under Wis. Stat. § 6.86(2)(a), generating controversy over their right to do so. Likewise, long-term care facilities accustomed to the assistance of Special Voting Deputies had to make do without hands-on support.

“We understand that some voters still have questions about how the 2020 elections were conducted, and we hope this report will answer many of them,” Wolfe said. She also encouraged voters to visit the commission’s FAQ page for the 2020 election, which answers many common questions and misconceptions about the election. The page is available at <https://elections.wi.gov/faq/2020>.

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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.