

WISCONSIN ELECTIONS COMMISSION

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December 8, 2017

The Honorable Alberta Darling, Senate Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 317 East, State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

The Honorable John Nygren, Assembly Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 309 East, State Capitol
PO Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Nygren:

The Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) requests the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) create 3.0 FTE permanent SEG-F positions in fiscal year 2017-18 with an end date of June 30, 2018 and provide \$113,200 SEG-F expenditure authority to s. 20.510(1)(x) in fiscal year 2017-18. The WEC also requests that the Committee create 3.0 FTE permanent GPR positions in fiscal year 2018-19 with the intent that they be included in the agency's base budget and fully funded during the 2019-21 biennial budget. In fiscal year 2018-19, these positions will be funded with existing GPR funds, estimated to be \$226,300. As a result of these actions, the agency will spend remaining Help America Vote Act federal funds on other elections administration functions more quickly than previously estimated, thereby reducing the GPR lapse from s. 20.510(1)(a) required by Act 59 at the end of fiscal year 2018-19 by \$339,500 from \$912,000 to \$572,500. As the Administrator of the Wisconsin Elections Commission, I will represent the agency at the quarterly meeting of the Joint Committee on Finance. If I am unable to attend, Meagan Wolfe, the Deputy Administrator, will represent the agency.

Summary of Request

Pursuant to § 13.101(2) and § 13.101(3), Wis. Stats., the Wisconsin Elections Commission requests the JCF create 3.0 SEG-F positions and SEG-F expenditure authority in FY18 and 3.0 permanent GPR positions in FY19 to enable the Elections Administration team to maintain a comprehensive and current knowledge of federal and state election laws and procedures to complete state-level tasks and to provide training and support to local clerks as well as to maintain cybersecurity of the agency's IT applications. This involves hiring an IS Technical Services Professional to focus on cybersecurity of WEC IT applications, an Elections Specialist to focus on the security and certification of voting equipment, polling place set up, and ballot security procedures, and an Elections Specialist to focus on voter services and outreach, including maintaining and updating public information resources related to voter registration and Photo ID requirements.

FY-18

# FTE	Position	Hourly Wage	# Hours	Salary	Fringe Rate	Fringe	Salary & Fringe
1	Elections Specialist	\$25	1040	\$26,000	0.395	\$ 10,270	\$36,270
1	Elections Specialist	\$25	1040	\$26,000	0.395	\$ 10,270	\$36,270
1	IS Technical Services Prof	\$28	1040	\$29,120	0.395	\$ 11,502	\$40,622
						TOTAL	\$113,162

FY-19

# FTE	Position	Hourly Wage	# Hours	Salary	Fringe Rate	Fringe	Salary & Fringe
1	Elections Specialist	\$25	2080	\$52,000	0.395	\$20,540	\$72,540
1	Elections Specialist	\$25	2080	\$52,000	0.395	\$20,540	\$72,540
1	IS Technical Services Prof	\$28	2080	\$58,240	0.395	\$23,005	\$81,245
						TOTAL	\$226,325

Background

In the 2015 – 2017 biennial budget for the Government Accountability Board, the State’s election staff was reduced from 35.75 to 31.75 FTE positions. In the 2017 – 2019 biennial budget, position authority for the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) was further reduced to 25.75 FTE positions. Together, this represents a 28 percent reduction in state-level elections administration staff over two budget cycles, despite the fact that both the Legislature and ongoing events have continually increased the agency’s portfolio of duties to ensure the accuracy and integrity of Wisconsin elections.

Assessing the impact of the staff reduction must start with an understanding of the uniqueness of Wisconsin’s decentralized election administration structure and the challenges it creates. Most states conduct elections at the county level. County clerks have important roles in Wisconsin elections, but the state’s 1,853 municipal clerks directly conduct the voter registration and voting process. The WEC is responsible for training and supporting both county and municipal clerks, as well as school district clerks. The WEC is also responsible for developing resources for clerks to train their election inspectors who work at the polls.

Approximately two-thirds of Wisconsin municipal clerks work part-time, and many have other full-time jobs and are limited by their governing bodies in the number of hours they may work on all their clerk duties. Hundreds of municipal clerk positions turn over every year. Also, many clerks in smaller municipalities do not have the in-house IT expertise or support that is essential to working securely in WisVote, the statewide voter registration system. Even when there are not significant legislative changes, WEC staff must ensure that each new municipal clerk has the training and guidance necessary to conduct elections as efficiently, accurately and securely as an experienced clerk with a full complement of election and IT staff. The decentralized structure also requires WEC staff to provide training and support to clerk staff working in WisVote, and to manage the system access of nearly 3,000 WisVote users.

These recent reductions in elections agency staff pose a risk to the smooth administration of elections in Wisconsin, and also create a greater challenge for the agency and local election officials to meet

their legal obligations to fully implement federal and state laws. In the past, the Legislative Audit Bureau has noted that the former State Elections Board and Government Accountability Board were unable to keep up with the number of tasks assigned to them. This challenge will only increase when the reduced staffing level results in similar and more significant difficulties in the future.

The reduction in the staffing level for the Elections Administration team resulted in the elimination of critical positions that focus specifically on voting equipment testing and voter services. The voting equipment specialist is traditionally responsible for overseeing the testing and certification of voting systems while also providing guidance on voting system security to county and municipal election officials. He or she also oversees the post-election voting equipment audit process and monitors updates to previously approved voting systems in Wisconsin to ensure continued compliance with certification standards.

The voter services specialist's main responsibility was delivering clear, concise and comprehensive information about the voter registration and voting processes to the public. The position developed and maintained the agency's voter information website, MyVote Wisconsin, which displays information such as polling place locations and sample ballots while also serving as the online voter registration portal and the online ballot delivery system for military and overseas voters. The position also assisted individual voters and clerks using the online systems, and ensured the collection of absentee ballot information from municipal clerks as required by the U.S. Department of Justice.

As outlined in previous correspondence to the Legislature and Governor, the WEC's statutory responsibilities have not diminished – and in fact continue to expand due to legislative directives, voting trends and current events. The best example of new responsibilities and priorities is the agency's comprehensive election security planning, which is a significant expansion of previous efforts in this area due to the risks related to interference by foreign government actors or other parties. The agency has taken on the mission of evaluating and implementing best practices with regard to the security of Wisconsin's election systems and infrastructure, including the voter registration system, voting equipment, voting locations and results reporting.

The necessary and expanded attention to election security matters diverts already limited staff and resources from other core functions of the agency. Every member of the WEC staff is involved in the effort to incorporate election security practices and information into agency tasks as well as the training and tools provided to local election officials. The IS Technical Services Professional position is intended to focus on the cybersecurity of WEC IT applications. In partnership with organizations such as the Department of Homeland Security, MS-ISAC, and the Division of Enterprise Technology, this position would review and implement best practices to protect WisVote and other IT applications, recommend and provide tools to ensure that agency staff and local election officials maintain robust cybersecurity, engage in ethical hacker exercises to identify and correct IT vulnerabilities, and serve as a point person to implement the agency's overall elections security plan.

Request Meets Statutory Criteria of § 13.101(3), Wis. Stats.

The agency request meets the criteria for supplementing its general operations funding set out in Wis. Stats. § 13.101 (3)(a)1. The creation of these positions and the increased federal expenditure authority in FY18 will address critical functions that affect the administration of elections as well as the public's confidence in the integrity of elections. They also relate to functions that are at risk of inadequate attention as existing staff attempts to remain current with other ongoing and pressing priorities. The agency request is authorized and submitted pursuant to a unanimous vote of the Wisconsin Elections Commission at its meeting of November 28, 2017.

Request

The Wisconsin Elections Commission requests the Joint Committee on Finance create 3.0 FTE permanent SEG-F positions in fiscal year 2017-18 with an end date of June 30, 2018 and provide \$113,200 SEG-F expenditure authority to s. 20.510(1)(x) in fiscal year 2017-18. The WEC also requests that the Committee create 3.0 FTE permanent GPR positions in fiscal year 2018-19 with the intent that they be included in the agency's base budget and fully funded during the 2019-21 biennial budget. In fiscal year 2018-19, these positions will be funded with existing GPR funds, estimated to be \$226,300. As a result of these actions, the agency will spend remaining Help America Vote Act federal funds on other elections administration functions more quickly than previously estimated, thereby reducing the GPR lapse from s. 20.510(1)(a) required by Act 59 at the end of fiscal year 2018-19 by \$339,500 from \$912,000 to \$572,500.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Michael Haas, Administrator
Wisconsin Elections Commission

cc: Legislative Fiscal Bureau (2)
Department of Administration (45)
Wisconsin Elections Commission Members