



# April 7, 2020 Election Summary Report

Submitted to the Commission

April 18, 2020





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## INTRODUCTION

### **Summary**

The April 7 Presidential Preference and Spring Election was by all definitions unprecedented. Wisconsin was the only state thus far to conduct a statewide election in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic “stay at home” order. Wisconsin is also the most decentralized state for election administration, meaning that 1,850 municipal election officials and 72 county election officials had to adapt to significant changes from court rulings, public health guidance, and voter behavior shifts towards vote by mail. This summary is a very high-level overview and only captures the major efforts WEC staff responded to and implemented for the April 7, 2020 election. This summary does not account for the many remarkable accomplishments and successes of Wisconsin’s local election officials all of whom overcame unforeseen obstacles and ensured polls were open in each city, town, and village in the state.

The summary identifies areas of impact, provides a discussion of each, and outlines next steps related to efforts and initiatives of WEC staff. The summary in each section will provide information on the area of focus followed by discussion of some of the high-level lessons learned, and finally next steps for improvements which WEC staff are working on for the remaining elections in the 2020 cycle.

### **Background**

Ballots for the April 7, 2020 Spring election became available, by statute on February 20. Shortly thereafter in-person absentee voting and voter registration within municipal clerk’s offices began. The Governor issued his first executive order related to COVID-19 on March 12, well after the election had already begun.

### **Election Preparations**

Sections 1-6 describe undertakings prior to election day to support local election jurisdictions in their preparations for election day.

### **Election Day Summary**

Sections 7-8 describe undertaking on Election Day, April 7, 2020 where polling places in all 1850 jurisdictions opened and issued ballots to their voters. While in-person turnout made up less than 20% of voters who participated, the effort on the part of local election officials to ensure polling places in every community were able to operate was remarkable.

### **Post-Elections Summary**

Sections 9-10 describe additional election related changes that applied to the week following election day which required continued effort on the part of local election officials and support by WEC. This section includes some of the main areas of focus.





# **Section 1: Sanitation Supplies and Personal Protective Equipment**









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## SANITATION SUPPLIES AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

**Summary:** Because of the nationwide shortage of sanitation supplies and PPE, local election officials relayed to WEC in early March that they were unable to procure supplies needed for in-person voting. WEC staff then sent a survey to all local election officials asking them to detail their need for supplies to support safe, in-person voting. The local election officials were able to work with their county health departments and through their own procurement channels while WEC simultaneously looked for opportunities to purchase supplies for distribution to local election officials. WEC experienced the same difficulty in finding or procuring supplies either in the state or around the nation. A ticket for supplies was also entered into the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) based on clerk needs. Ultimately, WEC worked with SEOC and state procurement to send the supplies needed to all polling places in Wisconsin. Wisconsin's 72 county clerks played a key role in distributing supplies to more than 2,000 polling places. Supplies that were distributed include:

- Over 8,000-liter bottles of liquid 70% ethyl alcohol solution that was used as a hand and surface sanitizer. The solution was sourced from a local distillery as all other state and national supply chain options were exhausted
- Over 10,000 16oz plastic spray bottles and printed labels for the bottles for the liquid alcohol solution
- 500,000 isopropyl alcohol wipes for use on voting equipment and electronic touchscreens.
- Surgical masks for poll workers
- Latex gloves for poll workers
- 1.5 million ballpoint pens so that each voter would have their own to sign the poll book and mark their ballot
- ~2,000 rolls of painter's tape to facilitate social distancing
- 10,000+ social distancing and public health signs

**Discussion:** The National Guard helped with the packaging and distribution of supplies from the stockpile in Madison to regional facilities around the state. The counties then drove to the regional facilities, or coordinated pick up in vehicles large enough, to bring the supplies back to the county office for distribution to the municipalities and/or each polling place. WEC did not know until all the individual procurements were complete and the distribution and packaging was complete how many of each supply would be provided to each polling place. Some of the items were found by the SEOC in the day before distribution so the exact makeup of the supplies were unknown until they arrived at the polls. Jurisdictions reported having adequate supplies for election day to accomplish practices prescribed in elections specific public health guidance. Voters have also reported to our office that they felt safe in polling places and that there were adequate sanitation supplies. Some jurisdictions reported having

excess supplies which we are now in the process of redistributing to the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District for their May 12 election.

**Next Steps:** With the benefit of time that was not available before the April 7 election, WEC staff can begin to assist jurisdictions with finding the needed supplies for the August and November statewide elections. State and local election officials will be able to better gauge the amount of supplies they may need, based on their experience in April. WEC staff is also hopeful that with additional time, there will be the opportunity to procure more traditional sanitation supplies and to provide them to the jurisdictions well in advance of the election so that they have time to incorporate the supplies fully into their election day plans and pre-election in-person processes.

## Section 2: WisVote Database







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## WISVOTE DATABASE

**Summary:** The WisVote database is the system used by almost 3,000 local election officials to administer elections. While WisVote and the WEC do not issue ballots, the clerks use WisVote to record when they send and receive absentee ballots, to enter voter registrations, and to record voter participation. The system was built by the WEC team and launched in 2016. The system was built based on the way Wisconsin conducts elections, which involves mostly voting in-person at the polls and registering to vote at the polls on election day. By mail voting and registration options are certainly accounted for in the system, but most municipalities had never received a large volume of absentee requests for a specific election prior to this election. Clerk activity in WisVote prior to the election was much higher than any prior election because clerks were all entering and issuing record numbers of absentee requests at the same time. The system performed very well but required round the clock monitoring and auditing to handle this unique and unprecedented user behavior and traffic.

**Discussion:** The system required a number of updates to accommodate extended deadlines for absentee requests and online voter registration. These extensions meant changing automation in the system to assign voter records and requests to new deadlines and elections. WEC staff also monitored capacity of the system to ensure memory space. Multiple increases of memory were needed to keep pace with absentee requests and attached photo ID's. WEC staff also created two significant new processes to assist local election officials with the new volume of absentee requests. One change was to create an absentee ballot request report that documents when a voter submits a request that includes a photo ID. This change was significant because it allowed WisVote to capture and store photo files of photo ID. This process is usually completed by email. Photo files are very large, therefore the storage and capacity in WisVote had to be significantly adjusted. WEC staff also created "poll book" reports or pages so that jurisdictions with consolidated polling places could use the WisVote system to check in voters, produce and print an individual poll book page for them, and record new registrations and participation in real time on election day. Again, these were not processes that had been conceptualized previously and required significant development and testing.

**Next Steps:** With additional time, WEC staff will be able to work with local election officials to build additional absentee by mail functionalities. These features will include a new module in the system for "pending" absentee requests which will dramatically reduce any manual data entry and can be entered into the system by the clerk approving the request information and the photo ID. Also, WEC staff will continue to explore the use of WisVote at the polls on election day. Again, this process can save jurisdictions significant time when using consolidated polling places. The WisVote poll book report ensures voters are given the correct ballot and requires no additional data entry needed after election day. However, security and other risk factors will need to be considered to ensure the correct balance of security and efficiency exists. Additional changes to WisVote to accommodate a higher volume of absentee by mail are outlined in the CARES Act grant memo.





## Section 3: MyVote Website









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## MYVOTE WEBSITE

**Summary:** MyVote is the public facing website where voters can interact with their records and their data in the WisVote system. On the MyVote website, voters can request an absentee ballot, track when their ballot was sent and received by their clerk, register to vote online, find their polling place, view a sample ballot, view their voting history, and more. The site was built by WEC staff with extensive usability studies conducted with hundreds of voters to learn how they use the site. Based on historical data, most voters went to MyVote to find their polling place or to view a sample ballot. Site analytics show this to be true in February 2020, where traffic to the polling place look up tool reached a new record high. Features like requesting an absentee ballot were previously used by voters, but never at the rate they were utilized in the lead up to the April 2020 election. Deadlines for online voter registration and for absentee requests were extended multiple times by court actions prior to this election and deadlines for ballots to be returned and witness requirements were also changed. Deadlines and dates are all currently hardcoded in the MyVote system and in the data exchange with the WisVote database. Therefore, each change required extensive development and testing to avoid unintended consequences. WEC staff also engaged in extensive load testing prior to the election and up to election day to ensure that the site could handle record breaking traffic. Increasing capacity as it was needed required around the clock monitoring of the site. Certainly there were unique challenges and obstacles for some voters at the election, but the work of WEC program and IT staff in maintaining and modifying MyVote, as well as the performance of the website itself, was a key factor in accommodating a significant level of voter turnout, second only to the record turnout for the 2016 Spring Election and Presidential Primary.

**Discussion:** Usability has always been a foundational principle for WEC staff and is a critical part of website development to make sure that voters are able to navigate the site successfully. Because changes to workflows and deadlines had to be made very quickly and because of the prohibitions on gatherings where usability sessions are usually conducted, WEC staff was unable to usability test most changes prior to implementation. There was also the need for more messaging on the site for emergency notices than had ever been needed before. Load testing is also a critical component to success and, fortunately, WEC staff was able to adjust load testing plans to accommodate the extremely high volume of site traffic coupled with new user behavior and needs.

**Next Steps:** WEC plans to conduct extensive usability studies on the MyVote site to account for new voter behavior patterns. Traditionally, voters used the site to facilitate in-person voting. New voter needs drive traffic to the site for all electronic and by-mail transactions. WEC staff will work to augment voter workflows for online voter registration and absentee ballot requests. With the increased demand on by-mail voting there is also an increased need for voters to have transparency into the process. Voters have expressed a strong desire to be able to track their absentee ballots like they would any other important package. Utilizing the CARES Act grant, WEC staff hopes to incorporate intelligent mail barcodes into the absentee process and incorporate that information into the MyVote system. WEC staff will also be conducting usability tests on site messaging to ensure voters see and can understand important notices if they are needed in future emergencies.



# Section 4: Envelopes and Postage







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## ENVELOPES AND POSTAGE

**Summary:** In all previous elections, the majority of Wisconsin voters cast their ballots in-person at the polls on election day. Some voters typically cast an in-person absentee ballot but less than 10% of voters typically vote using an absentee ballot by mail. In the April 7, 2020 election more than 80% of voters who participated did so by casting an absentee ballot by mail. Unofficial and incomplete data indicate the total absentee voting, including in-person absentee voting, ballooned to 1.27 million absentee ballots being issued by municipal clerks. Clerks had already purchased absentee ballots and absentee ballot envelopes based on historic need. Therefore, clerks had only prepared and budgeted for 10-15% absentee by mail, including costs for by mail ballot envelopes and required postage. This significant and unplanned shift meant that clerks quickly ran out of the required outer “election mail” transmission envelopes, and the return “certificate” envelopes required by statute for the absentee process. Further, shortages in the paper supply chain were reported by local election officials meaning they were unable to purchase additional supplies. WEC staff was able to work with paper and print vendors in the state to source enough paper stock and have envelopes printed. The SEOC also played a key role in the procurement and distribution of the envelopes to municipalities.

**Discussion:** The current envelope process is very reliant on specific paper stock and experienced print vendors to be able to meet the USPS approved standards. Other states who vote primarily by mail have a simplified return envelope with an inner security or certificate envelope. This process requires clerks to use three envelopes but makes the process much less reliant on specific stock and printers. Budgets in local election offices should also be considered, when changes to the by mail process are developed. Current law and processes will require jurisdictions to cover significant increases in vote by mail costs while still maintaining the need to expend the same amount of funds historically spent on polling places and in-person voting processes.

**Next Steps:** As outlined in the CARES Act grant memo, WEC staff is exploring ways to absorb unbudgeted postage and envelope costs using federal grant funds. WEC staff is also exploring new designs and options for absentee envelopes that may be more readily available and allow for less dependence on specific stock and experienced print vendors. Furthermore, the envelope redesign will allow WEC staff to work with local election officials on developing a usable, efficient absentee certificate and envelope process that can be used for the August and November 2020 elections.





## Section 5: Poll Workers







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## POLL WORKERS

**Summary:** In a large election there are between 20,000-30,000 poll workers needed statewide. With the COVID-19 crisis, many poll workers in a more vulnerable health demographic were unable to serve in that role for the April 7 election. In recent statewide surveys, it has been reported that the majority of poll workers are over the age of 60. Many are also over the age of 70 or 80. At the start of the crisis, clerks began reporting to WEC they had a shortage of poll workers and that many clerks were unable to serve in-person processes because they were also in a vulnerable demographic. WEC then sent a survey to all municipal clerks asking them to identify their poll worker shortages. Based on the survey, municipalities reported a shortage of more than 7,000 poll workers. 111 jurisdictions described their shortages as critical, defined as not being able to staff any polling places. 126 jurisdictions described their need as severe, meaning they could not fully staff all polling places. Based on this need, WEC immediately put in a ticket for poll worker personnel at the SEOC.

**Discussion:** Because clerks need time to train poll workers, WEC immediately urged state decision makers to exercise authority to assign state personnel as poll workers to fill critical gaps. WEC staff also put out numerous press releases and held press events to encourage Wisconsinites who were able to serve as poll workers. Recruitment materials were also created for local election officials including draft press releases and draft recruitment letters that clerks could send to other municipal and county employees, school districts, and private industry. WEC also created a “become a poll worker” feature on the MyVote website where residents could contact their clerk to become a poll worker. This new feature was used by local election officials and by partners of the SEOC such as the United Way for recruitment efforts. Municipal clerks have a statutory role to train poll workers and historically WEC has not produced or prescribed poll worker training. Because of the anticipation of new, first time poll workers, WEC staff quickly produced a full curriculum of online, video-based poll worker training that local jurisdictions could use to train new poll workers remotely with limited notice. Ultimately in the days prior to the election the Governor authorized the National Guard to serve in plain clothes as citizen poll workers in their home communities. That process is described in a section below. State employees were also encouraged to volunteer in their local communities as poll workers.

**Next Steps:** As with all initiatives relevant to the April 7 election, time was very limited. Ideally, poll workers should be recruited and trained months before a major election. In preparation for the August and November elections WEC will continue to provide recruitment tools to local officials and work with state partners to recruit poll workers well in advance of the election. WEC staff will also continue to refine the training program for poll workers so that it can be used by local election officials to train new poll workers remotely. The exposure of National Guard members and other individuals to the election process may serve as a catalyst to increasing the pool of poll workers for future elections.



# Section 6: Guidance and Communications







## GUIDANCE AND COMMUNICATIONS FOR CLERKS

**Summary:** In every election communicating to 1,850 local election officials and 72 counties can be a challenge. Because of the unprecedented health crisis and continual changes resulting from court decisions communication with WEC local election partners was critical leading up to the April 7 election. Throughout the process, the deadlines for absentee voting and voter registration changed. The requirements for witness signatures and absentee ballot return deadlines and terms changed multiple times, requiring WEC staff to communicate new changes which occurred within 24 hours. All traditional in-person voting practices had to be re-visited and re-constructed in light of the COVID-19 crisis. Between March 12 and April 7 WEC staff sent more than 50 communications and guidance documents to clerks. In the weeks prior to a typical election WEC staff, in keeping with a communications policy developed with the clerks, send an average of 10 communications and attempt to avoid issuing new communications to clerks within the week prior to the election. Many of the communications created were developed with a public health official assigned to our agency for a very brief time to review documents from a public health prospective. WEC staff created more than 20 election specific public health documents, an entirely new perspective for the agency, using the high level guidance provided by the public health official which can be found here <https://elections.wi.gov/covid-19>. WEC staff also held numerous webinars in the weeks leading to the election to present this guidance and answer clerk questions. Many webinars were held live up to three times in a day so that clerks would all have training opportunities that met their schedule.

**Discussion:** WEC staff received very positive responses from our local election partners about the communications during this crisis. While the volume of information was difficult to keep pace with, all matters communicated were of a critical nature. The recently instituted RAVE alert system was also used on multiple occasions to alert clerks on their phone and emails if there was a critical communication that needed their attention. Opportunities to provide information during live webinars were also an important option. While the recordings of the webinars were also posted, live webinars, at various times throughout the day allowed clerks to be able to directly participate and ask questions. The WEC was assigned a public health official to help structure guidance for only 24 hours in the week before the election. A more extended time period may have allowed for more consolidated guidance to be produced at the beginning of the planning process.

**Next Steps:** WEC staff will continue to work to develop training materials for local election officials on how to incorporate public health practices into election processes. With additional time before the August and November election, the guidance can be woven into existing training programs. Additional time will also allow clerks to continually train poll workers on these practices. WEC staff will also continue to work with clerks to fine tune communications protocols based on the April 7 experience to ensure that the most useful information is being brought to their attention at the correct time.





## Section 7: Polling Place Consolidation









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## POLLING PLACE CONSOLIDATION

**Summary:** Some jurisdictions chose to consolidate their polling places, a process by which multiple wards are combined into the same polling place. In 2020, jurisdictions reported consolidation was required due to the unknown in-person turnout and shortage of poll workers. Other jurisdictions consolidated because their original polling places became unavailable due to the evolving health crisis. WEC issued guidance to jurisdictions regarding consolidation and ensuring that the correct ballots were issued to the correct voter and on using the newly developed WisVote process to check in voters and print individual poll book pages. In larger jurisdictions that chose significant consolidations, long voter lines were reported throughout election day.

**Discussion:** In most elections, polling place consolidations and location changes occur at least 30 days before an election. This allows time to provide notice to voters. There are also emergency provisions in the law to change polling places on election day. Because of the evolving health crisis and other factors jurisdictions made changes to their election day polling place plans after March 7. The first COVID-19 executive order was issued on March 11 changing many jurisdictions' election day plans. The Commission's decision to authorize municipal clerks to consolidate or relocate polling places within 30 days of the election greatly simplified this process.

**Next Steps:** With the experience of April 7, WEC hopes to help create data models and reports that municipalities can use in determining polling place locations. Data models could include looking at historical turnout for wards in relationship to geographical information to inform consolidation decisions. It remains to be seen whether the in-person voting rate will reflect the numbers seen in April 2020 or if new patterns of voter behavior will emerge depending on the evolving public health crisis and voter's new exposure to absentee by mail. WEC also anticipates providing additional guidance on the statutory process for moving polling places and providing notice. Additional work will also be done to explore expanded use of WisVote by consolidated jurisdictions. In consolidated jurisdictions using WisVote or Badger Book electronic poll books, there were no reports of voters receiving the wrong ballot. These tools also ensure new voter registrations are assigned to the correct districts and wards in real time.



# Section 8: National Guard as Poll Workers







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## NATIONAL GUARD AS POLL WORKERS

**Summary:** Starting in March and with the emerging crisis WEC staff worked with local election officials to understand their need for poll workers, as is outlined above. WEC put in a ticket at the SEOC and had had many conversations about the need for poll worker personnel including the possibility of using the Wisconsin National Guard (WING). On April 2, 2020 WEC was notified that the National Guard would be activated to serve as poll workers in their local counties of residence. On that same day, WEC staff began working with municipal and county election officials to ensure their previous requests for personnel were still accurate. On Friday, April 4 WING put out a call for Service Members (SM) to serve as poll workers in their county of residence. On Saturday, April 5 WEC and WING personnel held a conference call with all 72 county clerks and large municipalities to discuss deployment plans. WEC staff also continued to develop online poll worker and election public health training for the SM to complete. Nearly 2,500 Wisconsin National Guard Service Members were put on active duty on April 6 to begin the intake and health screening process. On the afternoon of April 6, the SM completed the WEC-created training on poll worker duties, voter registration, chief inspector training, and election public health training. On Monday, April 6 the requested number of SM reported to county clerks to be deployed to municipalities in need to do polling place specific training. In some counties, there was a reserve number of SM who stayed with the County on Monday for additional training and to be on standby in case there were un-forecasted shortages on Election Day. The WING service members served in regular poll worker roles, in plain clothes and most in their home municipality or county of residence.

**Discussion:** Municipalities who used WING personnel report the experience as a very positive one that helped them to be successful on election day. Many jurisdictions are hopeful that the service members will continue to serve as volunteer poll workers in their home communities in the future. Some jurisdictions stated that additional time would have been useful to know how many service members would be assigned to them sooner. Jurisdictions also expressed that it would have been helpful to train the service members earlier in the process. Only the Governor has the authority to activate the state's National Guard. Once the order was made and the call was made by WING for volunteers, WING was able to provide the number of requested volunteers in each county to WEC and subsequently to county and municipal election officials. Municipal, county and state election officials all wish to express their gratitude for the WING personnel who served their community on election day. The National Guard organized and facilitated its largest ever statewide activation but its Service Members served in the capacity of civilian poll workers under the supervision of municipal clerks and chief election inspectors.

**Next Steps:** WEC will continue to work with local election officials to identify poll worker shortages for the remaining 2020 elections. WEC has already conducted a survey with clerks in the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. Currently jurisdictions in that area are citing a shortage of fewer than 30 poll workers, as compared to over 500 SM who served as poll workers for the Spring Election in those jurisdictions. WEC will continue to survey jurisdictions through this year and maintain a ticket for personnel with the SEOC. WEC will also continue to develop and augment training that can be used for last minute poll worker certification and training.





# Section 9: Postmarks and Postal Issues







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## POSTMARKS AND POSTAL ISSUES

**Summary:** As was previously mentioned, in previous elections less than 10% of voters cast their ballot using a by-mail absentee ballot. The current law also says that all absentee ballots must be received by 8:00pm on Election Day to be counted, there are no postmark requirements or exceptions for late arriving ballots in the law. Multiple Court actions prior to April 7 resulted in a requirement that by mail ballots must either be received by 8:00 pm on election day or be postmarked no later than April 7 and returned to the clerk by April 13<sup>th</sup> to be counted. Starting on April 8, municipalities began reporting irregular or illegible postmarks on ballot return envelopes. Some voters also reported not receiving their absentee ballots by Election Day. Some voters had been issued ballots more than 10 days prior to the election but never received them. WEC asked clerks to report their postmark and mailing issues to the USPS and the WEC.

**Discussion:** WEC worked with local election officials to understand and collect postmark examples and postal issues. WEC then worked with USPS personnel at the local, state, regional, and national level to get information about the postmark process. Ultimately, USPS provided information that each postal branch made best attempts to postmark ballots on election day, but in the case of missing or illegible postmarks there was no way to determine what date the ballot was marked. WEC staff also sent a letter to local, state, regional, and national USPS representatives asking for them to provide additional information on ballots that were not received and on outgoing ballots that were returned to municipalities without explanation. A response has not yet been received.

**Next Steps:** As outlined in the WEC staff memo on the 2020 CARES Act grant, WEC staff hopes to use the federal funds to build Intelligent barcodes into the absentee ballot system. Barcodes will allow voters and clerks to track their ballot through the entire process. It will also provide very important information about if and when ballots are received by voters. The current WisVote process and tracker on MyVote relies on the data that each clerk enters into the system regarding when they send the ballot and when they receive the voted ballot back. Barcodes would also provide a definitive answer of when each ballot was received by the postal service, voter, and clerk should postmarks ever be part of the process in future elections.



# Section 10: Results Reporting







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## RESULTS REPORTING

**Summary:** Under current state law, on election night municipalities produce an unofficial result set, which they send to county election officials. The county election official then posts the unofficial results, by municipality and reporting unit on the county website. The Associated Press and other media outlets then aggregate the unofficial results that the public sees on election night. The results are then certified through the canvass process at the municipal, county, and state level before the results are official- usually a month after the election. Court decisions in the days prior to the April election barred local election officials from creating an official tally of results or releasing the unofficial results to the public until 4 pm on April 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Discussion:** To accommodate the new procedure, the WEC created new guidance for local election officials to ensure that jurisdictions could suspend voting equipment as open between Election Day and April 13<sup>th</sup> without producing a result set. Security procedures and chain of custody procedures were also put into place. On election night WEC sent a RAVE alert to all local election officials reminding them that it would be a violation of the court order to release the unofficial results before 4 pm on April 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Next Steps:** The extended tally period allowed WEC and local election officials to see the benefit of being able to carefully process ballots and results sets without the pressure of an end-of-the-night deadline. While the extended period was only ordered by the court for the April 7 election, it helps to reinforce the message that accurate and secure elections and tallies take time to produce. Lessons learned from the extended period will also be applied to future guidance and updates to results reporting systems and reports used by local election officials.





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## CONCLUSION

The Wisconsin Elections Commission spent significant time and attention over the past 3 years focusing on election security challenges related to foreign interference in campaigns and elections. While that effort sharpened the ability of the WEC and local election officials to develop contingency plans and train for adjusting to fast-moving developments, the rapid onset of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic quickly and dramatically shifted the focus of emergency planning and responses. Two months prior to the election there were only emerging hints of the impact of the public health impacts on the election. One month before the election it was considered unlikely that over one million absentee ballots would be issued. One week before the election there was no guarantee that all polling places in Wisconsin would be adequately staffed. The normal intensive work of both the WEC and local election officials prior to an election were impacted significantly, swiftly and repeatedly by circumstances beyond our control. Multiple lawsuits and court decisions required frequent Commission meetings and decisions and adjustments by election officials and voters.

Throughout the public health crisis and election preparations, the WEC staff and clerks overcame numerous challenges in order to serve Wisconsin voters, recognizing their roles as administrators of an election with parameters and characteristics beyond their control. This report reflects an initial attempt to document the issues which arose, steps taken to address those issues, and lessons learned to improve future processes. This report should also acknowledge that the changes and additional responsibilities needed due to COVID-19 were in addition to the high volume of work it normally takes all Wisconsin election officials to conduct a statewide election. As with each initiative of the WEC and local election officials, the ultimate focus is on the experience of each individual voter and their ability and opportunities to participate in democracy.

While the election was certainly imperfect in some respects, there can be no doubt that WEC staff and its many partners made extraordinary efforts to assist in the administration of the Spring Election and Presidential Primary. County and municipal clerks across the state showed amazing flexibility and dedication to ensure resources could be used in the most efficient manner, while considering the health and safety and voters and election officials. The WEC appreciates the assistance and cooperation of its partner agencies at the federal and state levels, the Wisconsin National Guard and State Emergency Operations Center, county and municipal clerks, poll workers and voters who made the election a reality in the face of uncertainty. With these partners the WEC will continue to evaluate lessons learned and to research and implement additional measures to improve the administration of future elections.