



# Wisconsin Elections Commission

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**DATE:** October 5, 2020

**TO:** Wisconsin Municipal Clerks  
City of Milwaukee Election Commission  
Wisconsin County Clerks  
Milwaukee County Election Commission

**FROM:** Meagan Wolfe  
Administrator

**SUBJECT:** Poll Worker Recruitment Program

The WEC is encouraging municipal clerks to reach out to local organizations to recruit poll workers for the November election. Additionally, there are multiple outreach items and strategies for clerks to recruit poll worker. While the WEC has requested support for critical vacancies from State Partners for November, there is no guarantee they will be available to provide support on that day. All municipal clerks must have the minimum numbers of poll workers to conduct voting on Election Day. We have provided the resources below to assist clerks in this process. If you tried every avenue on this list and still have a critical shortage, contact the Wisconsin Elections Commission immediately.

## Recruitment Strategies

The Wisconsin Elections Commission directly emailed you a survey that is creating a database of critical poll worker needs. You may submit this survey for your own municipality or if you are a county, you may submit this on behalf of your municipalities if you are aware of critical shortages. We will use this list to post to MyVote here: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/PollWorker>. This list will help voters see which clerks they should be contacting to become a poll worker. These lists will also be shared with local organizations who are working to recruit poll workers so efforts can be focused in those areas with the most critical needs.

## Contingency Planning

Please prepare a back-up list of poll workers in case of last-minute emergencies or shortages. If your polling places do not meet the minimum numbers of poll workers, they cannot open on election day. Your county or municipal governing body would be a good resource to receive a list of individuals who would be able to step up in the event a poll worker is unable to work. It is suggested to have a minimum of 1 back-up poll worker per 5 poll workers. Additionally, the municipal clerk may step in and serve as a poll worker in case of an emergency as long as they are eligible to serve.

## Groups to Recruit

Clerks are encouraged to reach out to various organizations and groups to work on recruiting poll workers:

*Wisconsin Elections Commissioners*  
Dean Knudson, chair | Marge Bostelmann | Julie M. Glancey | Ann S. Jacobs | Jodi Jensen | Mark L. Thomsen

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*Administrator*  
Meagan Wolfe

## Government

- **State employees:** Every state agency must permit their employees to serve as an election official.
- **Local government employees:** Each local governmental agency may permit its employees to serve as an election official. Check into the availability of municipal and county employees. While chief inspectors must be qualified electors of the municipality, other election inspectors can come from anywhere in the county to serve at a polling location.
- **Local elected or appointed officials:** For example, the municipal or deputy clerk, town board trustees, city alders and county board supervisors, may also work as an election inspector as long as they are not a candidate on the ballot.

Any government employee who is eligible to serve as a poll worker will be allowed to do so without loss of fringe benefits or any other penalty for the entire 24-hour period of Election Day. The employee must provide the agency with at least 7 days' notice of application for leave, and the municipal clerk shall verify appointment upon request. Wis. Stat. § 7.33(3) and (4). The employee will tell their supervisor the amount of compensation received as an election official, which will be deducted from the employee's pay for the scheduled working hours during Election Day. Wis. Stat. § 7.33(5). Alternatively, the employee may waive election inspector compensation so that their agency compensation is not adjusted.

## Civic Organizations

- **Civic, advocacy and professional organizations:** Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, FFA, United Way, Disability Rights Coalition, etc.
- **Political parties:** Local political parties may have members that are able to serve as election inspectors. If the parties submitted an election official list in November of 2019, but want to expand that list, they can continue to send the clerk additional names. If the party did not submit a list of poll workers, they are still able to suggest individuals to be unaffiliated poll workers.

## Education

- **High School Students** – Any pupil at least 16 years old with a 3.0 grade point average or the equivalent may serve as an election inspector at the polling place serving the pupil's residence with the written approval of their parent or guardian. A pupil at least 16 years old with less than a 3.0 grade point average may serve as an inspector with the written authorization of their parent or guardian and the written certification of their principal that the pupil has met any criteria established by the school board for service as an inspector.
- **College Students:** Many college students in your area may be interested in working as a poll worker. Reaching out to local community colleges, universities, and technical schools is a good option to get poll workers, and you may be able to work with them to offer extra credit opportunities.
- **Teachers and School District Administrators:** These staff, including university, college or technical college administrators and staff in your area, may be a good way to recruit additional poll workers.

## Local businesses

- **Business Employees:** All private employers must permit any employee to serve as an election inspector without loss of fringe benefits or seniority privileges earned for scheduled working hours while serving as an election inspector, but the employer is not required to pay wages for time missed while serving as an inspector. Wis. Stat. § 7.33(6). The employee must be appointed to be an inspector and must provide at least 7 days' notice for leave, which must be granted for the entire 24-hour period of election day. Wis. Stat. § 7.33(3).

## Professional Organizations

- **State Bar Associations:** Some professional organizations such as the State Bar of Wisconsin may give attorneys continuing education credits for their work as an election official.

## Recruitment Strategies

When reaching out to these local organizations and voters, clerks should emphasize:

- **Compensation:** Any poll worker is eligible to receive compensation for their time as a poll worker. Clerks may also choose to increase their pay rates (hazard pay) for poll workers as an additional plus to serving.
- **Public Health:** Poll workers are ensuring that polling places are clean and safe for everyone while exercising their right to vote.
- **Civic Pride:** Poll workers serve a critical role in our democracy and are ensuring that everyone is able to cast a ballot on Election Day.
- **Experience:** Poll workers learn critical aspects of the polling place, including the voter registration process, state statutes, and customer service skills.
- **Access to PPE:** All election officials are provided with masks, cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizer to protect themselves on Election Day.

It may be useful to consider using local leaders and elected official to encourage voters to serve as poll workers. Additional materials to use are outlined below.

### Additional Outreach materials

#### [Sample News Release for Poll Worker Recruitment](#)

This document is a sample news release that clerks are encouraged to use to put out the call for election inspectors. Clerks can customize it with their own name, or their mayor's, village president's, or town board chair's name, or whoever they think would be helpful in a public call to action.

#### [Poll Worker Promotion on MyVote.Wi.Gov](#)

Prior to each election, the Wisconsin Elections Commission updates this information to reflect the current election. This will refer voters to information on how to become a poll worker.

#### [Election Worker and Volunteer Position Information](#)

Many polling places have different needs in 2020 than they have in the past. Polling Place Helpers typically did not exist prior to April 2020, but now are a necessity for many polling places. These helpers are able to help with sanitizing, line management, monitoring for curbside voting needs (not conducting curbside voting), and other additional tasks at the polling place. These individuals do not have to be from the county, and there are no formal requirements that they must statutorily meet. This document reviews the position descriptions of the Polling Place Helper, as well as the Election Inspector, Chief Election Inspector, Greeter, and Election Registration Official.