



Wisconsin Elections Commission

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DATE: For the June 10, 2021 Wisconsin Elections Commission Meeting

TO: Members, Wisconsin Elections Commission

FROM: Meagan Wolfe
Administrator

SUBJECT: Biennial Impediments to Voting Report

The Wisconsin Elections Commission staff has drafted the “Impediments to Voting Report” for 2020-2021, and the draft report has been provided to you as part of the materials for today’s meeting. Previous iterations of this report have not been approved by the Commission prior to their submission, but staff wanted the Commission to review and approve this version so that any feedback could be incorporated into the final report.

Wis. Stat. §5.25(4) requires the Commission to submit a report on impediments to voting faced by elderly voters and voters with disabilities to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature by June 30 of each odd-numbered year. This report details the impediments to voting identified by the Commission’s polling place accessibility site visit program during the 2020-2021 reporting period. It also details impediments identified by advocates for voters with disabilities who serve on the WEC Accessibility Advisory Committee. In addition, the report describes our efforts to provide training and supplies regarding polling place accessibility to local election officials.

The data compiled for this report is the result of 46 polling place site visits that the Commission has conducted during one election over the past two years. The low number of site visits was due to travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic that forced the WEC to reconsider the original plan approved by the Commission to visit 500 polling places over this biennium. During this period, 22 municipalities have been visited in 3 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties. Over 300 accessibility problems have been identified during site visits, for an average of 7.1 problems per polling place. A significant number of these problems are considered high severity problems, meaning that these barriers would likely prevent a voter with a disability from entering a polling place and casting a private and independent ballot. Many of the remaining problems do not represent major obstacles to participation and can be remedied by little to no cost solutions.

This report is being provided to the Commission in a draft format for your feedback prior to submission to the legislature by the June 30, 2021 deadline. Staff has solicited feedback on the draft from members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, as is required by statute, and is in the process of receiving and reviewing this feedback in anticipation of incorporating relevant information into the final report.

Recommended Motion:

The Commission authorizes staff to finalize and submit the 2020-2021 Impediments to Voting Report pending any changes requested by the Commission. Staff shall also consider and incorporate any feedback from the Accessibility Advisory Committee into the final report before submission.

Wisconsin Elections Commissioners

Ann S. Jacobs, chair | Marge Bostelmann | Julie M. Glancey | Dean Knudson | Robert Spindell | Mark L. Thomsen

Administrator
Meagan Wolfe