Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 20, 2018

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Reid Magney, 608-267-7887

WEC Seeks Public Input on Election Security Funding Plans

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Elections Commission is asking local election officials and the public for ideas to improve election security using new federal funding.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission has committed about half the $6.9 million grant money to hiring six new staff members over four years ($2.4 million) and new technology ($1 million) to meet immediate security needs before the 2018 General Election and beyond.

Interim Administrator Meagan Wolfe said the Commission staff consulted with key election security partners including the Department of Homeland Security and Wisconsin's Division of Enterprise Technology to prioritize the initial spending. Now, the Commission wants input from local election officials and the public about how best to spend the remaining federal funds for long-term election security needs.

"We need to know how we can help local election officials with their technology and training needs, as well the public's ideas for ideas for improving election security," Wolfe said.

The Commission has established several ways for local election officials and members of the public to provide feedback:

- Attend the WEC's public meeting at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, September 25, at the State Capitol. The Commission will take public testimony at the beginning of the meeting, which is being held in GAR Hall, Room 413 North. Testimony is limited to 2 minutes per person, though speakers representing groups may be given additional time at the discretion of the chair. The Commission welcomes speakers to submit detailed written testimony.
- Email a letter to the Commission at elections@wi.gov outlining your ideas.
- Mail a letter to Wisconsin Elections Commission, PO Box 7984, Madison, WI 53708-7984.
- Members of the public can also take a short online survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VKZJFNL

The online survey asks respondents how they think the WEC can best use the grant funds to continue to improve and enhance election security beyond 2018. Options include election security training, post-election audits, staffing, updating computers and equipment, and managing and correcting misinformation about Wisconsin elections. Respondents will also be asked, in their own words, how they would like to see the WEC spend the grant monies to help ensure elections remain safe in Wisconsin.

The online survey will be available until November 16. WEC staff will analyze all feedback and make recommendations for long-term election security plans to the Commission in early 2019.

The Commission will be sending a more detailed online survey to county and municipal clerks to assess their specific needs.

Background

In March 2018, Congress appropriated $380 million under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to be distributed to the states to improve election administration, including technology enhancements and election security. Wisconsin's share of the funds is $6,978,318.

Using those grant funds, the WEC is hiring six new project positions focused on election security. They include three election specialists who will focus on voting equipment, data quality and training, an election security lead, an IT project manager, and a grants accountant. All positions have now been filled except the accountant, which is in recruitment. The WEC authorized the use of up to $600,000 in federal grant funding per year for four years for these positions, for a total of $2.4 million.

In addition, WEC will initially invest approximately $1 million in technology to bolster cyber security, including multi-factor authentication (MFA) software and hardware for the state's voter registration system.

For detailed information about steps the WEC has already taken to secure Wisconsin's elections for November 2018 and beyond, visit the WEC website: https://elections.wi.gov/elections-voting/security.

###