

Election Update



March 2009 WISCONSIN GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

Every voter counts.

G.A.B. Director Makes Case for Elections Budget to Joint Finance Committee

G.A.B. Director Kevin Kennedy testified on March 17 to the Wisconsin Joint Legislative Committee on Finance about the agency's budget for 2009-11. Included in his plea to maintain proper agency funding was information about the G.A.B.'s budget proposals for funding to support elections administration in the state, and the potential damage that further cuts to resources and/or staff, which would hamper capacity to provide assistance and services to municipalities.

"In order to provide support to local election officials and carry out State and HAVA requirements, current staffing level must be maintained," Kennedy said. He went on to explain that the G.A.B. wishes to expand the use of state funds originally set aside for reimbursement of municipalities for Wisconsin's expanded voting hours (in 2006) to "provide critical services to address unforeseen extraordinary municipal situations such as court-ordered action in response to G.A.B. policy decisions (ballot reprinting), voting systems damaged by natural disasters, etc." Kennedy reemphasized the G.A.B. will continue to advocate on behalf of municipalities and their continuing responsibility to conduct fair, open and transparent elections.

News of the New Wisconsin Election Data Collection System (WEDCS)

The Elections Division's project to improve the efficiency and accuracy of collection/reporting of election data in Wisconsin will be piloted for the April 7 General Election. Two pre-test training sessions were held for clerks in February. Wisconsin county clerks reviewed the new system at their meeting on March 3. WEDCS educational opportunities are posted to the "Education/Training" section of the Elections Division website, including classes scheduled at Wisconsin Municipal Clerks Association's regional meetings. On March 12, the Division hosted a U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) national evaluator and an array of local election officials and state partners to review progress on the WEDCS. Clerks will enter data directly into the system after the April 7 election.

Incentive checks are being mailed to municipalities for reporting data from the November 4, 2008 election. To date, over 700 checks have been mailed to municipalities, and a total of \$109,000 has been distributed. Checks are being sent in batches so each municipality's payment is on its way. Friendly Reminder: Incentive grants may only be used to improve election activities, especially for the collecting and reporting of elections data. Note that while grant funds may be used to expand existing budgeted elections' tasks, these monies may not be used to substitute existing funding for budgeted elections' tasks.

New Polling Place Accessibility Survey Ready for Clerks' Use on April 7

The finalized 2009 Polling Place Accessibility Survey and supporting documents are available under "Accessibility" on the website. Clerks should review all of the documents before completing the new survey for each polling place on Election Day, April 7, 2009. In compliance with legislative directives, the survey has been revised, and supporting documents added to better help clerks determine whether or not a polling place is accessible. The Elections Division appreciates the enthusiasm and cooperation of local election officials in making polling places accessible to all voters. Clerks with questions regarding the survey, supporting documents or accessibility in general, may contact the G.A.B. Help Desk at the number below. This survey is the best evidence of municipalities' compliance with state and federal accessibility requirements.

#42