

# State of Wisconsin \ Government Accountability Board

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** September 18, 2012

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

**FROM:** Nathaniel E. Robinson  
Elections Division Administrator  
Government Accountability Board

**SUBJECT:** Implementation of My Vote WI – Online Issuing of Absentee Ballots

On September 17, 2012, the Government Accountability Board will launch a new voter services website called My Vote WI. Along with other voter information and resources, the new site will permit military and permanent overseas voters to apply for and receive the appropriate ballot for their voting jurisdiction online, rather than waiting for the ballot to be transmitted by their municipal clerk. This is the online tool which was described in our previous communication dated July 31, 2012, and which is the subject of the G.A.B. webinar scheduled for this Tuesday, September 18, 2012. This memorandum provides background information regarding the impetus for the My Vote WI website along with guidance regarding steps which municipal clerks must take to process ballots requested through the online tool.

As we previously reported, the G.A.B. received a grant from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) to develop technology allowing military and permanent overseas voters to obtain an absentee ballot online. The terms of the grant require the online tool to be available for voters to cast ballots at the 2012 General Election. At the same time, the G.A.B. and local election officials have been subject to a federal court consent decree resulting from a small number of municipal clerks who did not transmit absentee ballots by deadlines established under federal law during federal elections in 2010 and 2012. The online tool created as part of My Vote WI is designed to make it easier for both municipal clerks and military and permanent overseas voters to submit and process absentee ballots requests and to transmit absentee ballots between clerks and voters. The system also contains security measures to ensure the privacy and integrity of the voting process. Implementation of the online tool will help Wisconsin comply with the terms of the federal court consent decree.

Currently, municipal clerks issue absentee ballots to military and permanent overseas voters by mail, fax, or email. Clerks are required to continue providing ballots by the method requested by the voter, but may ask if the voter would rather obtain a ballot through the online tool. Absentee ballots requested through My Vote WI will be issued by the G.A.B. on behalf of the appropriate clerk and will not contain the clerk's initials. Both clerks and election inspectors must be aware of this process so that absentee ballots are processed appropriately in both the clerk's office and at the polling place.

G.A.B. Issuing of Absentee Ballots on Behalf of Municipal Clerks

The My Vote WI site will allow military and permanent overseas voters to access their absentee ballots online. The G.A.B. will be issuing the absentee ballot on behalf of the municipal clerk through the My Vote WI site. If you do not want the G.A.B. to issue absentee ballots online on your behalf, you must contact the G.A.B. immediately. In that case, clerks will need to take additional steps to document the status of the request and the absentee ballot.

Each absentee ballot issued on My Vote WI will be automatically tracked in the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) and will be given a mailing ID. The mailing ID will print on the absentee certificate that the voter must complete and mail with their voted absentee ballot. The mailing ID will also display in SVRS and be printed on the notification each clerk receives when a voter accesses an absentee ballot online.

Security Measures

The absentee ballots issued online will not contain the initials of the municipal clerk. To ensure that the voters are using official absentee ballots and not printing ballot from other sources and sending them to clerks, My Vote WI will print a mailing ID on the absentee certificate that prints with the absentee ballot. The voter must complete the certificate envelope in order for the ballot to be counted.

<b>OFFICIAL ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATION/CERTIFICATION</b>	
<i>Note: With certain exceptions, an elector who mails or personally delivers an absentee ballot to the municipal clerk at an election is not permitted to vote in person at the same election on Election Day. Wis. Stat. § 6.86(6).</i>	
<i>Voter: Complete the information below and sign the certification in the presence of a witness who must also sign.</i>	
11/6/2012	Mailing ID: 346960740
DANE COUNTY	NP-1
City of Madison - Ward 54	0714059820
NEWMAN, MILITARY 2	
35 N PARK ST, MADISON, WI 53715	

Clerks will receive an email notification that a voter has accessed their absentee ballot online. In the notification, the voter’s mailing ID will be listed. The mailing ID will also be listed in SVRS. Clerks must write the mailing ID on the absentee ballot log next to the voter’s name. SVRS-generated absentee ballot logs will not include the mailing ID when printed from SVRS.

When clerks receive the voted absentee ballot from the military or permanent overseas elector, the clerk must check to make sure that the mailing ID on the absentee certificate matches the mailing ID indicated in the notification. Election inspectors must be instructed to verify that the mailing ID on the absentee certificate matches the mailing ID on the absentee ballot log before counting the absentee ballot on Election Day.

Military and Permanent Overseas Accessing Ballots Online

The My Vote WI site will allow military and permanent overseas voters to access their absentee ballots online. In doing so, the site will also make changes automatically in the SVRS. Below are some things all clerks, reliers and self-providers, need to know about changes voters are able to make in SVRS.

Military Voters:

- Military voters who are not in SVRS will be entered into the system when they complete an absentee ballot request.
- A voter does not have to be marked as “military” in SVRS to use the system. The voter is required to affirm that they are a military voter during their use of the military voter functions on the My Vote WI site.
- Registered military voters can change their name or address using My Vote WI, which will automatically update that information in SVRS.
  - The automatic updates will act as a “merged voter” in SVRS and can be unmerged if the clerk finds the voter updated a voter record that was not theirs.
- Voters are required to provide the last four digits of their Social Security Number before they can access their absentee ballot
  - Voters should use the My Vote WI site to apply for absentee ballots online to ensure they provide the correct information to get their absentee ballot online.
  - If you enter a voter with a vote location of “Online” they must have at least the last four digits of their SSN in the voter record to get their ballot.
- If a military voter does not have the last four digits of their SSN in SVRS, and provides them in the My Vote WI site, their voter record will be updated with the last four digits provided.
  - The notifications sent to clerks will include that information; clerks should print that part of the notification and attach it to the registration form or absentee request form they have on file for that voter.
- If a military voter selects a voter record as theirs but enters the last four digits of their SSN and it does not match what is in SVRS for that voter, then SVRS will create a new voter record for that military voter.
  - The notifications will indicate that the voter has an associated voter record.
  - Clerks must check the information they have on file for that voter to see if a typo was made or if they believe someone is impersonating that voter.
  - If clerks believe the voter records are for the same voter, the voter records must be merged in SVRS.
    - Reliers need to inform their Providers if the records are for the same voter.
- Military voters may also use the My Vote WI site to request that the clerk mail or fax them an absentee ballot as well as online.
  - Clerks must honor these requests.
  - The notifications will include a copy of the absentee request for clerks to print.
  - The notifications will indicate that the voter requested that the ballot be mailed or faxed to them.
- Military voters may cancel an existing absentee application (that is listed in SVRS) and create a new one using My Vote WI.
- A military voter can spoil an existing ballot, one that is issued in SVRS, and get another ballot.
  - The voter can only get up to 3 ballots.
  - All permanent overseas voters are to be tracked in SVRS so all absentee ballots issued by the clerk must be in SVRS.
  - The ballot will be marked as “Cancelled-ReIssued” in SVRS.
  - The ballot that was most recently issued is the only ballot that counts. You should make sure you keep track of the most recent Mailing ID.
    - Previously issued ballots are spoiled and if returned, the clerk must make a tear in the envelope containing the ballot, mark the envelope as “spoiled” and place the envelope with the ballot in a “Spoiled Ballots” envelope.
    - The “Spoiled Ballot” envelope is also to go to the polls on Election Day for additional spoiled ballots.

Permanent Overseas Voters:

- A voter does not have to be marked as “overseas” in SVRS to use the system. The voter is required to affirm that they are a permanent overseas voter to use the overseas voter functions on the My Vote WI site.
- Only permanent overseas voters who are registered voters may access their absentee ballots online.
- New permanent overseas voters may send in their voter registration application and an absentee application at the same time.
  - Both may be mailed to the municipal clerk.
  - If you receive an absentee request accompanying a voter registration application for a permanent overseas voter, the absentee application has not been entered into SVRS.
    - If the permanent overseas voter requested to receive their absentee ballot online, you must enter the absentee application in SVRS, even if you do not use SVRS to track absentee ballots and even if you are a relier.
    - Since the voter was not registered, the My Vote WI system cannot automatically enter the request in SVRS when the voter was initially completing the absentee request.
- Permanent overseas voters may cancel an existing absentee application (that is listed in SVRS) and create a new one using My Vote WI.
- If a permanent overseas voter does not have the last four digits of their SSN in SVRS, and provides them in the My Vote WI site, their voter record will be updated with the last four digits provided.
  - The notifications sent to clerks will include that information; clerks should print that part of the notification and attach it to the registration form they have on file for that voter.
- If a permanent overseas voter selects a voter record as theirs but enters the last four digits of their SSN and it does not match what is in SVRS for that voter, then the voter will be required to re-register.
- If a permanent overseas voter wishes to change their name or address, they will be required to re-register.
- A permanent overseas voter can spoil an existing ballot, one that is issued in SVRS, and get another ballot.
  - The voter can only get up to 3 ballots.
  - All permanent overseas voters are to be tracked in SVRS so all absentee ballots issued by the clerk must be in SVRS.
  - The ballot will be marked as “Cancelled-ReIssued” in SVRS.
  - The ballot that was most recently issued is the only ballot that counts. You should make sure you keep track of the most recent Mailing ID.
    - Previously issued ballots are spoiled and if returned, the clerk must make a tear in the envelope containing the ballot, mark the envelope as “spoiled” and place the envelope with the ballot in a “Spoiled Ballots” envelope.
    - The “Spoiled Ballot” envelope is also to go to the polls on Election Day for additional spoiled ballots.

Notifications:

- Clerks will receive notifications if a voter from their municipality uses any part of the My Vote WI system that interfaces with SVRS.
- Notifications are sent out nightly and not in real time.

- Clerks will receive a summary of the activity in their municipality including:
  - New Online Voter Registrations
    - A list of all voters who used the “Click and Mail” process and completed their voter registration using My Vote WI
    - The voters still need to mail in their registration
    - These applications will be marked as “Pending” in SVRS under “Voter Applications.”
    - You will receive a notification when any voter completes a voter registration, not just military and permanent overseas voters.
  - New Online Absentee Applications
    - A list of all military and permanent overseas voters who use the My Vote WI site to request an absentee ballot.
    - This will include requests to receive ballots by mail, fax, and online.
    - A copy of the voter’s absentee application will come in a separate email.
      - Print off the absentee applications and file them with your other absentee applications.
  - Absentee Ballots Downloaded
    - A list of any military and permanent overseas voters who accessed their absentee ballots online
    - Record the mailing ID listed on the notification on the absentee ballot log
  - Updated Voters – Merged Records
    - A list of all voters who were registered and military voters who changed their name or address.
    - These voter records have been merged and there is one voter record for the voter.
  - Updated Voters – Not Merged Records
    - A list of all voters who were registered and provided a SSN that did not match the voter record which they indicated was their record.
    - SVRS created a new voter record for the military voter.
    - Clerks must review both the existing and new voter record to determine if the voters are the same person or different voters.
      - If the voter records are for the same voter, the clerk must merge the records or inform their Provider to merge the records.
  - Updated Voters – Updated Records
    - A list of all voters who updated their SSN on the My Vote WI site.
    - The voter record was automatically updated with the new SSN.
    - Print the notification and attach it to the voter registration or absentee application you have on file for that voter.
  - Spoiled Absentee Ballots
    - A list of all voters who spoiled an existing absentee ballot and were issued another ballot.
    - This will include ballots you Cancelled and Reissued in your office as well as online at My Vote WI.
    - The most recently issued ballot is the one that can be counted at the polling place. All other ballots are spoiled and cannot be counted.

#### More Information

A webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, September 18, 2012 to provide a tutorial for the new My Vote WI site and demonstration of how military and permanent overseas voter can use the site to get absentee ballots. The taped webinar will be posted to the G.A.B. website on the day following the webinar for people to watch when they have time. The webinar can be found here:

<http://gab.wi.gov/clerks/education-training/webinars>

Please contact the GAB Help Desk at [GABHelpDesk@wi.gov](mailto:GABHelpDesk@wi.gov) or 608-261-2028 if you have any questions.

Thank you.

cc: Kevin J. Kennedy  
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