

State of Wisconsin \ Government Accountability Board

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Chairperson

KEVIN J. KENNEDY
Director and General Counsel

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 21, 2015

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

FROM: Michael Haas
Elections Division Administrator

Richard Rydecki
Accessibility Coordinator

SUBJECT: Impediments to Voting Report for 2014-2015

The Government Accountability Board staff has issued its “Impediments to Voting Report” for 2014-2015. The report has been posted for your reference on the G.A.B. website at <http://www.gab.wi.gov/publications/reports/2015-accessibility-report>.

Wis. Stat. §5.25(4) requires the Board to submit a report on impediments to voting faced by elderly voters and voters with disabilities to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature each odd-numbered year. This report details the impediments to voting identified by the Board’s polling place accessibility audit program during the 2014-2015 reporting period. It also details impediments identified by advocates for voters with disabilities who serve on the G.A.B. Accessibility Advisory Committee. In addition, the report describes our efforts to provide training regarding polling place accessibility to local election officials and outlines the Board’s public information strategies regarding polling place accessibility.

The data compiled for this report is the result of 808 polling place audits that the Board has conducted during seven elections over the past two years. During this time period, 568 municipalities have been visited in 48 of the 72 Wisconsin counties. Almost 4,000 accessibility problems have been identified by the audit program, for an average of 4.9 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.

The Government Accountability Board is committed to ensuring that all voters have access to the polls on Election Day. Local election officials have worked with their municipalities and the Board to increase polling place accessibility and these efforts are reflected in the information found in the report. The Board appreciates all of the work that has been done and will continue to work with local election officials to achieve 100 percent polling place accessibility compliance. For assistance with any media inquiries about the contents of this report and how it may relate to your municipality, please contact Richard Rydecki at Richard.Rydecki@wi.gov or (608) 261-2015.