

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

212 E. Washington Ave., Third Floor • Madison, WI 53703 • gab@wi.gov • (608) 266-8005 • Help Desk (608) 261-2028 • <http://gab.wi.gov>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
February 22, 2012

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

First Election with New Voter ID Law Successful

MADISON, WI – Wisconsin’s first election with voters required to show a photo ID went smoothly, with very few reported problems, according to the Government Accountability Board.

“Overall, we had a good experience with voter photo ID at the Spring Primary election,” said Kevin J. Kennedy, Wisconsin’s chief elections officer. “We were able to resolve the few issues that came up, and we will be following up with local election officials to avoid those issues in the Spring Election on April 3.”

Under the law, voters are required to show a photo ID to prove their identity and to sign the poll book before receiving a ballot. In 2011 special and recall elections, voters were asked for an ID, but were not required to present identification to vote. Here are the issues that arose during Tuesday’s election:

- **Issues with poll workers being too strict.** The Board received a few reports of poll workers comparing the address on the voter’s ID card to the address on the poll list, which is not proper. “The purpose of showing an ID is to prove who you are, not where you live,” said Elections Division Administrator Nathaniel E. Robinson. “Registered voters have already proven residency when they registered.” In one case, a registered voter who went to vote after 7 p.m. was sent home by a poll worker to get a utility bill to prove her residency, even though she has a Wisconsin Driver License but the address did not match the address on the poll list. She emailed the G.A.B. Help Desk, and the staff immediately intervened on her behalf with the local clerk, so the woman was allowed to vote before the polling place closed at 8 p.m.
- **Issues with poll workers being too lax.** The Board received a few reports of voters who were given a ballot without being asked to show a photo ID or sign the poll list. G.A.B. contacted local clerks to have them correct the situation. In one case, staff learned the problem was isolated, resulting from the poll workers dealing with three voters at one time.
- **Issues with Veterans ID cards.** The Board received a report of one voter who has a Wisconsin driver license, but insisted on using a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs photo identification card. In addition, the Help Desk received numerous telephone calls Tuesday from veterans who believe their VA cards should be acceptable. The law allows voting with a “military ID card issued by a U.S. uniformed service,” but the VA is not a military service.

Robinson noted that the Help Desk also received a number of calls from people with questions about other forms of photo ID they believe should be included in the list of acceptable IDs, such as membership cards from warehouse stores. “The Legislature approved the use several specific forms of government-issued ID for voting under the new Voter Photo ID Law,” he said. “Poll workers are not able to accept other forms of photo ID, even if they are government issued.”

Kennedy said a variety of factors went into making Tuesday’s first election with photo ID a success. “The news media has done a terrific job of getting the word out about the new law in addition to our Bring It to the Ballot public education campaign,” Kennedy said. “That coverage has been very helpful in this low-turnout election, but we still have much work ahead in getting the word out to all 4.3 million eligible Wisconsin voters before elections later this year, which will have a much higher turnout.”

In January, the G.A.B. launched the Bring It to the Ballot public education campaign with television and radio public service announcements, as well as billboard, Internet and print ads. Public service announcements and videos are available at <http://bringit.wisconsin.gov> and on YouTube.

Robinson also credited municipal clerks for the job they have done training poll workers about the new law and the new procedures at the polling place. He urged voters who have a complaint or question about whether election workers are following the law to submit them through the G.A.B.’s website: <http://gab.wi.gov/complaints>.

Voters with questions about the law, whether they have the right ID to vote and how to get a free state ID card should visit <http://bringit.wisconsin.gov> or call the toll-free Voter Photo ID information line at 1-866-VOTE-WIS (866-868-3947).

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The Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) is responsible for administration and enforcement of campaign finance, elections, ethics and lobbying laws in Wisconsin. The G.A.B. is made up of six non-partisan, former judges and is supported by an agency of non-partisan staff members.