

# Government Accountability Board

## State of Wisconsin

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## G.A.B. Requests \$460,800 for Voter Photo ID Public Education Campaign

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board has asked the Legislature to release \$460,800 in already-appropriated funds for a statewide TV, radio and online campaign to educate voters about the Voter Photo ID Law that will be in effect for the November 4 General Election.

“Now that voter photo ID is back in place, we need to remind voters to bring their IDs to the polling place,” said Kevin Kennedy, Wisconsin’s chief election official. “We also need to let people know how they can get a free state ID for voting, even if they don’t have their birth certificate.”

The “Bring It to the Ballot” multimedia ad campaign that ran briefly in early 2012 is updated and ready to go, but needs funding to get on the air, said Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B.

“The campaign’s message is that most people already have the ID they need to vote,” Kennedy said. “If they don’t have one, they can get a free ID for voting at the DMV, even if they don’t have some documents like a birth certificate.”

The campaign is designed to raise awareness and encourage the public to go to a website ([BringIt.Wisconsin.gov](http://BringIt.Wisconsin.gov)) where they can learn more about what IDs are acceptable and how they can get a free ID if they need one for voting. The campaign’s TV and radio ads, short videos and printable brochures are available on the website.

Before the Voter Photo ID Law was stopped by the courts in 2012, the G.A.B.’s plan was to use a low-cost, paid-public service announcement program offered by the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association throughout 2012, as well as online ads, outdoor billboards and some newspaper advertising. After the injunction in March 2012, the G.A.B. was prohibited from implementing the law, and had to shut down the ad campaign.

Since the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals lifted the remaining federal court injunction on September 12, 2014, the G.A.B. has been working on plans to restart the campaign, but has limited funds.

“There is very little time left to reach out to the public,” Kennedy said. “The low-cost program from broadcasters cannot be guaranteed to effectively reach voters so close to the election, so we need to buy advertising at market rates.”

Wisconsin’s 2013-15 biennial budget included \$460,800 for five project positions for the G.A.B. to implement voter photo ID, which would be held in the Joint Committee on Finance’s supplemental appropriation in the event the court injunctions were lifted.

Kennedy said it would be impractical to hire additional staff now, and the best use of the funds would be for an intensive public education campaign on TV, radio and online before the November election. The Voter Photo ID Law directed the G.A.B. to conduct a public information campaign before the first primary and general election that the requirement was in place.

The G.A.B.’s funding request was submitted to the Joint Committee on Finance, which has not yet scheduled its quarterly meeting to consider supplemental funding requests from state agencies. “If the committee acts expeditiously the agency should be able to implement a viable public information media campaign,” Kennedy said.

A copy of the detailed funding request is available with this news release on the G.A.B. website: [gab.wi.gov/news](http://gab.wi.gov/news).

In the meantime, the G.A.B. is working with the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association to purchase two weeks of paid public service announcement time at a cost of \$18,000, using limited existing agency funds. The PSAs could begin airing on Wisconsin TV and radio stations as early as Thursday, October 2, according to WBA.

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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.