

# Government Accountability Board

## State of Wisconsin

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## Absentee Voting Update 2

MADISON, WI – More than 110,000 Wisconsin residents have already requested absentee ballots or voted absentee in the clerk’s office for the June 5 recall election, according to the Government Accountability Board.

As of midday today, at least 113,558 absentee ballots had been issued by Wisconsin’s local election officials who track them using the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS). Just over one-third of municipalities track absentee ballots in SVRS, including all the state’s large cities.

To give that number some context, a total of 68,000 absentee ballots were tracked in SVRS for the May 8 recall primary. Also, there were 230,744 absentee ballots cast in the November 2010 General Election for Governor. As many as 75 percent of all absentee ballots are typically cast in the clerk’s office, with the remainder being delivered by mail.

“The numbers of absentee voters continues to grow,” said Kevin J. Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B. “There could be many reasons – voter enthusiasm and convenience, plus necessity for those who will be on vacation or away from home as the school year is coming to an end.”

In-person absentee voting in the clerk’s office runs through 5 p.m. or the close of business on Friday, June 1, whichever is later. Some clerks are offering extended hours to handle demand. Voters can find their local clerk’s office address and phone number on Voter Public Access: [vpa.wi.gov](http://vpa.wi.gov).

Elections Division Administrator Nat Robinson said the G.A.B. has received reports from clerks that a few people who come in to vote are confused about the difference between Wisconsin’s practice of in-person absentee voting and true early voting offered in other states.

“Some people who vote in the clerk’s office expect to be able to put their ballot into a tabulating machine or a ballot box,” Robinson said. “Under Wisconsin law, these ballots must be put into sealed certificate envelopes and sent to the polling place or a central count location on Election Day, where they will be opened and tabulated by election inspectors.”

Mailed absentee ballots must be postmarked by Election Day, and must be received by the clerk by 4 p.m. the Friday after the election.

Kennedy noted that there is a popular misperception that absentee ballots are not counted unless an election is close. “Every absentee ballot that has been properly cast will be counted,” Kennedy said.

Because of the popularity of absentee voting, many political parties, committees and interest groups mail out absentee ballot applications to voters they believe will support their candidates. The G.A.B. and municipal clerks around the state continue to receive complaints about these mailers because they contain political messages. But a bigger problem is that some mailers may have an incorrect address for the clerk’s office where they need to be sent, which could delay or prevent a voter from receiving an absentee ballot.

The deadline for clerks to receive a request for an absentee ballot by mail is 5 p.m. Thursday, May 31. Voters who request an absentee ballot using a flier they received in the mail should double check the clerk’s mailing address in the event of an error, Kennedy said.

In an age of social media where some people share pictures online of everyday things they do, Kennedy issued a reminder that voters should not take pictures of their completed ballots, let alone post them Facebook or Twitter. [Under Wisconsin’s election fraud law](#), it is a Class I felony to intentionally show your marked ballot to any person. “Don’t tweet your ballot,” he said.

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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.