

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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G.A.B. Statement Regarding Greater Wisconsin Mailer

MADISON, WI – The Government Accountability Board has received a large number of complaints from around the state in the last few days regarding a direct-mail flier from the Greater Wisconsin Committee. This flier did not come from the Government Accountability Board.

The flier lists the names and addresses of the recipient’s neighbors, as well as whether they voted in the 2008 and 2010 General Elections. The flier states that the information came from the Government Accountability Board. Many callers are upset that this information has been released.

Kevin J. Kennedy, Wisconsin’s chief election official, notes the following:

- Voter records (including voting history) are public records, and have been since the days they were kept in handwritten books in the municipal clerk’s office. State voter registration records have been all-digital since 2006.
- State law requires the G.A.B. to sell certain data contained in the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS). The cost to purchase the list for the entire state is \$12,500.
- Voters’ date of birth and other personal information, such as driver license or state ID number, or the last four digits of a Social Security number, are never sold.
- The Greater Wisconsin mailer also appears to have information about inactive and cancelled voters who are no longer eligible to vote without reregistering, or who may be deceased. The group may also have used other commercially-available mailing lists in preparing the flier.
- Political committees and interest groups buy the statewide voter list information regularly, and use it to send direct mail messages to voters. They also use it to send out pre-filled absentee ballot applications.
- Candidates and political groups also use this information to prepare “walking lists” for door-to-door canvassers.
- This is the first time to our knowledge that a group has used information in voter lists this way. There is no state law that prohibits such practices, since the information is public.

Persons who are concerned about the mailer may call the Greater Wisconsin Political Action Committee, at 608- 467-0300, write to them at PO Box 861, Madison WI 53701, or contact them through their website: <http://greaterwisconsin.org>.

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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.