

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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What Wisconsin Voters Need to Know for Recall Primaries

MADISON, WI – With Wisconsin’s first-ever statewide recall primary two weeks away, there are several important things voters should know.

On Tuesday, May 8 there will be Republican and Democratic primaries for Governor, and Democratic primaries for Lt. Governor and four State Senators in Districts 13, 21, 23 and 29. A list of candidates for the primaries is attached.

“Wisconsin has gone through great political turmoil since 2011, and the recall primaries and elections are the voters’ opportunity to have their say on these issues,” said Kevin Kennedy, the state’s chief election officer. “We encourage the people to get out and vote.”

“A recall primary is like most other primary elections, with a few exceptions,” Kennedy continued. “If voters take a little time to prepare before going to the polls, they can avoid confusion and delays.”

“Early Voting” – In-person absentee voting (also known as early voting) begins today in municipal clerks’ offices during normal business hours. The period for in-person absentee voting ends Friday, May 4 at 5 p.m. or the close of business, whichever is later.

Absentee Voting by Mail – Voters may request an absentee ballot from their local municipal clerk’s office. The deadline for most voters is 5 p.m. Thursday, May 3. The deadline for military and those who are indefinitely confined due to age, infirmity, health or disability is 5 p.m. Friday, May 4. Absentee ballots must be postmarked by Election Day, and received by 4 p.m. Friday, May 11 to be counted.

Voter Photo ID – The law is currently on hold as two lower court decisions stopping voter photo ID are being appealed. Given the normal amount of time appeals take, it is highly unlikely both injunctions would be overturned before the primary or the recall election on June 5. If that somehow happens, the G.A.B. and Wisconsin’s local election officials will be ready to implement the law.

Crossing Party Lines – Because each recall primary is a separate election event, voters may cross parties in the recall primary, but they may still only vote once per office. For example, in the Governor’s primary, you may only vote for one person, either a Republican or a Democratic candidate. There are only Democratic primaries for Lt. Governor and State Senate.

Write-in Votes – There have been rumors that the Governor could avoid a final recall election on June 5 if he won the Democratic primary by write-in votes. This is untrue. A person cannot be a candidate in two primaries for the same office. The G.A.B. has instructed clerks not to count write-in votes for anyone who is already a candidate in another primary for the same office and since the Governor is a primary candidate for the Republican Party, any write-in votes for the Governor in the Democratic Party are invalid.

2002 Senate Districts for 2012 Recalls – Under state law, State Senate recalls are held in the districts used for the past decade, not the new districts that take effect in November 2012.

Municipalities Split by Recall Senate Districts – The G.A.B. has identified 17 municipalities that are partially inside and partially outside of one or more Recall Senate Districts. In these municipalities, some voters will be able to vote in the State Senate recall elections, while others will only be eligible for the Governor and Lieutenant Governor elections. The list of municipalities is attached.

Check your registration – Elections Division Administrator Nat Robinson urged voters to use the Voter Public Access website at <https://vpa.wi.gov> to make sure that they are registered at their current address. Additionally, VPA will identify the races voters are eligible to vote in, and will tell voters whether they are eligible to vote within a Senate District that has a Recall election. Voters who are unsure about whether they are eligible to vote in a State Senate recall primary or election should contact their municipal clerk's office directly. If you have not registered to vote yet or you have a problem with your registration, contact your local municipal clerk's office to check your options. You can register at the polling place on Election Day.

Find your polling place -- If you are a new voter, the Voter Public Access website can help you identify your polling place location or your municipal clerk's office can also help you find it. Many newspapers also print the locations of polling places.

Know what proof of residence to bring -- If you are already registered to vote, you will only need to state your name and address to receive a ballot, and are not required to provide any additional documentation. After stating your name, you will need to sign the poll list. If you are registering at the polling place, make sure you have proof of residence and your Wisconsin driver's license number. If you do not have a Wisconsin driver's license, you can use the number from your Wisconsin ID card, or the last four digits of your Social Security number. Proof of residence can be established with a current lease, recent utility bill, or other official document issued by a unit of government with the voter's name and current address on it. A current university, college or technical institute photo ID is also acceptable if the institution has provided the polling place with a list of students who live in its housing and if the housing list includes citizenship information.

Be prepared -- Review your ballot before Election Day by checking out a sample ballot on the Voter Public Access website: <https://vpa.wi.gov>. A sample ballot will also be posted at the polling place. Make sure you know how to use the voting equipment where you live. Reviewing your ballot and voting equipment instructions before you get to the polls will help keep the lines moving on Election Day. Please contact an election official if you have any questions.

Avoid the crowds – Polling places are busier in the early morning and late afternoon hours as people head to and from work. Lunchtime is also a busier period of the day. To cut down on your waiting time at the polling place, consider voting during non-peak hours, such as the mid-morning or mid-afternoon periods. The polls are open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. across Wisconsin.

Avoid bringing undue attention or risk causing a disturbance – Voters should not wear campaign paraphernalia such as campaign/candidate buttons, shirts, hats, etc. inside the polling place. Those who wear campaign paraphernalia may be asked to cover it up or leave.

Exercise your right to vote – Most importantly, **GO VOTE!** All polling places will be open from 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Persons in line at 8:00 p.m. will be allowed to vote. Voters with questions or problems should talk to the chief election inspector who is in charge of their polling place. If the voter is not satisfied, contact the local municipal clerk or contact the G.A.B. at 608-261-2028, or gabhhelpdesk@wi.gov. The G.A.B. will be open from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Election Day.

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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.