

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

212 E. Washington Ave., Third Floor ▪ Madison, WI 53703 ▪ elections@wi.gov ▪ (608) 266-8005 ▪ <http://elections.wi.gov>

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

Elections Commission Investigates Isolated Voting Issues in Spring Primary

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Elections Commission is investigating isolated reports that some voters had to reregister at the polls Tuesday before they could vote.

“We are looking into reports and gathering information from our records, from clerks and from voters to figure out what happened,” said Michael Haas, Wisconsin’s chief election official. “Our goal is to ensure there are no problems at the Spring Election on April 3 or the August Partisan Primary or the General Election in November.”

Haas said the Elections Commission has not received reports yet of anyone who was unable to reregister at the polls and vote on Tuesday. Some voters were correctly required to register because they had either moved or had not responded to a mailing after failing to vote for four years. The Commission is investigating reports related to voters who indicate they are not in either of those categories. “While we do not have all of the facts to make definite conclusions at this point, we apologize for any inconvenience experienced by voters if they were required to reregister unnecessarily,” Haas said.

“We are asking voters who experienced a problem at the polls on Tuesday because they were not on the poll list to contact the Commission so we can resolve the issue,” Haas said. Voters may email the commission at elections@wi.gov or call 1-866-VOTE-WIS (868-3947) or 608-261-2028.

Haas said there may be several reasons why some voters experienced problems, some of them unrelated to the list maintenance processes, which is why the Commission wants voters to call or email so each case can be resolved.

Voters can verify their voter registration status online at <https://MyVote.wi.gov> by entering their name and date of birth, or by contacting their municipal clerk’s office. Voters who find they are not actively registered can now register online until March 14 if they have a driver license or state ID card and their address on file with the DMV is current. They can register in the clerk’s office until March 30, or on Spring Election Day, April 3.

State law requires the Elections Commission to conduct regular voter list maintenance activities to remove people from the active voter list who have died, moved or become inactive after a period of time. “The failsafe is that Wisconsin has Election Day voter registration, so someone who may have been inadvertently removed from the active list can still reregister at the polling place and cast a ballot,” Haas said.

After every November election, the commission identifies people who have not voted in any election in the past four years and mails postcards to those voters, asking whether they wish to remain registered. Many of those postcards are returned as undeliverable or the voters do not respond because they have moved.

In 2016, Wisconsin joined the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a consortium of 23 states that use voter registration and driver licensing data to improve the accuracy of America's voter rolls and increase access to voter registration for all eligible citizens. Members of the consortium securely submit these data to ERIC. After comparing these data, ERIC provides members with reports of voters who have moved and individuals who may be eligible to vote, but are not registered.

In September 2016, with data from ERIC, the state mailed 1.28 million postcards to Wisconsin adults who were identified as being eligible but unregistered to vote, encouraging them to register. This effort sought to add individuals to the voting rolls, and names were not removed as a result of this mailing. More information about this mailing is available here: <http://elections.wi.gov/node/4173>.

In November 2017, with data from ERIC, the state mailed postcards to approximately 343,000 registered voters who may have moved in-state and needed to reregister or moved out of Wisconsin and are no longer eligible. This mailing was based on a comparison of data from the Division of Motor Vehicles and the state voter registration list. More information about the ERIC movers mailing is available here: <http://elections.wi.gov/node/5360>.

The Commission is still gathering statistics for how many voters were deactivated as a result of the ERIC movers postcards. The Commission is also collecting information to determine why some voters may have been incorrectly flagged as having moved.

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The Wisconsin Elections Commission is responsible for administration and enforcement of election laws in Wisconsin. The Commission is made up of six Commissioners – four appointed directly by the State Senate Majority Leader, Speaker of the Assembly and the Minority Leaders in the State Senate and Assembly. The remaining two Commissioners are by the Governor with confirmation by the State Senate from lists of former municipal and county clerks submitted by the legislative leadership in each party.