

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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G.A.B.: Follow Recall Rules or Risk Wasted Efforts

MADISON, WI – The Government Accountability Board reminds citizens involved in Wisconsin’s unprecedented recall efforts about the rules for signing, circulating and filing recall petitions.

“Recall is a boots-on-the-ground, grass-roots process,” said Kevin Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B. “It is not something that can be done online, by e-mail, or on Facebook.”

Recall petition drives are organized by groups or individuals who have registered with the G.A.B. by filing forms which identify themselves to the public. They are responsible for printing the recall petitions and distributing them to circulators.

At least one person registering a recall committee must live in the official’s district, but people who circulate petitions are not required to be residents of the same district or state. Anyone who is a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old and not otherwise disqualified from voting, may circulate petitions. Circulators must personally witness each person sign the petition – they cannot leave petitions unattended on a table or bulletin board. People signing the recall petitions must be qualified electors of the officeholder’s district that is subject to the recall effort.

Recall groups have 60 days from the day they register with the G.A.B. to collect the required number of signatures to trigger a recall. The G.A.B. will only accept signed petitions from registered groups, said Nat Robinson, Elections Division administrator. “People should not send individual petitions to the G.A.B.,” said Robinson. “If they do, those petitions will not be counted.”

Exploratory groups have registered as political action committees to recall the Governor, and according to news reports they are collecting names of supporters. However, actual recall petitions for the office of Governor cannot be offered for filing until January 3, 2012, meaning they cannot be circulated until sometime in November 2011.

Anyone interested in learning more about the rules and deadlines for recalls is encouraged to visit the recall page on the agency’s website: <http://gab.wi.gov/elections-voting/recall>. The Recall Manual for Congressional, County and State Officials, which is accessible from that page, provides step-by-step instructions and timelines for the recall process. The Campaign Finance Information System (<http://cfis.wi.gov>) contains background information about the groups organizing recall efforts.

Recall committees have registered with the G.A.B. for all 16 State Senators who were elected in 2008 and are eligible for recall. The G.A.B.'s website lists the number of valid signatures required for each registered recall. If groups file petitions that are found to be sufficient, recall elections could be held this summer, most likely starting in July. However, if committees file recall petitions before the end of April, the timeline could be accelerated.

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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.