

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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Voters Have Rights and Responsibilities on November 2

MADISON, WI – Voting is one of Americans’ most important rights, but it also carries responsibilities.

“When you go to the polls on Tuesday to exercise your right, remember that you also have responsibilities,” said Kevin Kennedy, Wisconsin’s chief election officer.

“It is important for voters to be informed and know their rights,” said Nat Robinson, Elections Division administrator. “Being well informed and knowing your rights is the best defense against frivolous challenges to a voter’s eligibility.”

“If your home has been foreclosed, or if you have unpaid parking tickets, or if you did not respond to a letter in the mail, or if you have a failed HAVA Check match, none of these situations is a legitimate reason for you to be challenged,” said Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B.

Robinson reminds voters that the only legitimate reasons for a voter’s eligibility to be challenged is if the observer has firsthand knowledge that the voter is not a U.S. citizen or at least 18 years of age, has not lived in Wisconsin for 10 days, or is otherwise restricted from voting. An individual may be restricted from voting who has been convicted of a felony and is still under Department of Corrections supervision, or has been judged mentally incompetent, or has already voted in the election at the same or another location.

Wisconsin laws guarantee the right of every eligible citizen to vote, and also uphold the principle of one person, one vote. Election fraud is punishable by up to three years in state prison or a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. The G.A.B. audits voter lists after the election to identify people who may have voted in more than one place, or in more than one state. Voters suspected of election fraud will be referred to district attorneys for possible prosecution.

If you have moved since the last election, it is your responsibility to re-register to vote, which can be done at the polling place on Election Day.

The Government Accountability Board has prepared a one-page summary of voter rights and responsibilities that covers polling-place activities, including being an election observer, available online at <http://gab.wi.gov/rights>, as well as an enhanced complaints section at <http://gab.wi.gov/complaints>. A memorandum to election officials about polling place behavior is at <http://gab.wi.gov/node/1315>.

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.