

State of Wisconsin\Government Accountability Board

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Memorandum

To: Wisconsin County Clerks
Wisconsin Municipal Clerks
Milwaukee County Election Commission
City of Milwaukee Election Commission

From: Michael Haas
Elections Division Administrator
Diane Lowe
Lead Elections Specialist

Date: January 26, 2016

Subject: Requirement for County Clerks to Transmit Municipal Boundary Report to LTSB

Wisconsin Statute §5.15(4)(br)1 requires each county clerk to provide a report confirming the boundaries of each municipal boundary, ward and supervisory district to the Legislative Technology Services Bureau (LTSB) by January 15 and July 15 of each year. As counties submit their reports, Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) staff is notified. In reviewing these reports, staff is discovering ward boundary errors resulting from annexations.

The most common of these errors is annexing property into an existing ward when the territory being annexed is in a different congressional, assembly or county supervisory district than the ward to which it is annexed. When the property being annexed consists of different congressional, assembly or county supervisory districts than the existing ward, a new ward must be created. In the case of differing county supervisory districts, the municipality must either petition the county to amend its supervisory district boundaries or create a new ward.

As we look forward to the fall election, it is paramount that the most accurate and up-to-date ward boundaries and designations are included in WisVote in order to ensure correct assignment of electors to polling places and to offices on the ballot, as well as proper representation by their elected officials. Therefore G.A.B. staff will be contacting the clerk of any municipality whose report shows anomalies, as well as the county clerk, in order to resolve these issues quickly.

Wis. Stat. §5.18 provides that if a municipality fails to comply with the provisions governing ward boundaries in Wis. Stat. §5.15, the county may submit a compliant ward plan to the circuit court for promulgation, which the municipality must use until the governing body adopts a compliant ward plan. However, G.A.B. staff considers that option to be a last resort, and will continue to work with municipalities to correct any boundary or ward errors.

If you have questions, please contact the Help Desk at 608-261-2028 or gabhhelpdesk@wi.gov.