

# Government Accountability Board

## State of Wisconsin

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## Absentee Ballot Request Mailing Prompts Complaints

MADISON, WI – The Government Accountability Board has received inquiries from many Wisconsin voters, municipal clerks and news media about a mailing from the Republican Governor’s Association Political Action Committee that contains voter birthdates and telephone numbers.

The mailing is a combination of a campaign ad and absentee ballot application which has already been filled out for the voter and pre-addressed to the voter’s local municipal clerk. The Board and clerks do not send out such mailings or provide voter birthdates to political candidates or committees, or to anyone else except law enforcement agencies, under subpoena.

Kevin Kennedy, director and general counsel of the G.A.B., said that while the agency and local clerks are required by law to sell voter lists, they are prohibited from selling dates of birth, driver license numbers and other confidential information contained in the Statewide Voter Registration System. Because the G.A.B. does not sell voters’ birth dates, political groups will sometimes get that information from other commercially-available databases, and combine the lists. As a result, these merged lists may contain incorrect or outdated information which has not been provided from the official voter registration list.

“Sending out absentee ballot applications is not uncommon for major parties and campaigns. These mailings are legal, but they often provide no end of consternation to voters and election officials,” Kennedy said. “We recommend that political candidates and committees not use voters’ personal data. There is no requirement that voter’s birth date or telephone number be listed on an application for an absentee ballot.”

Kennedy also noted that voters may contact political candidates and groups if they have concerns about campaign mailings, using the committee’s contact information which is required to be included with any political ad, or by consulting the Board’s campaign finance database at <http://gab.wi.gov>. The Board’s records indicate that the RGA of Wisconsin PAC can be contacted at 202-662-4162.

Registered voters may request an absentee ballot on their own, and may find more information at <http://gab.wi.gov/elections-voting/voters/absentee>.

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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.