

# Government Accountability Board

## State of Wisconsin

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### **G.A.B. Sends Issue Ad Rule to the Legislature**

MADISON, WI – The Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.), on Monday, sent to the Legislature for approval an amended rule which would regulate political “issue ads” in Wisconsin.

The revised rule would subject to state campaign finance laws those individuals or groups that fund advertising which clearly identifies a specific candidate for office and contains language which suggests support or opposition for the candidate.

The Board held a public hearing on the amended GAB 1.28 Monday morning, voting unanimously – 6-0 – to move the amended rule to the Legislature. Only ads that contain specific words, such as “vote for” or “elect” are currently subject to regulation.

“This is a big step toward leveling the playing field and creating greater transparency in elections in Wisconsin,” said G.A.B. Director Kevin Kennedy. “With this vote, the Board has made clear that it stands on the side of public accountability.”

The G.A.B. began studying the issue of political advertising that avoids the use of so-called “magic words” nine months ago, hearing a variety of testimony from various speakers and considering four versions of the amended rule. Those words are:

- vote for
- elect
- support
- cast your ballot for
- [candidate name] for [office name]
- vote against
- defeat
- reject

“It’s very easy to side-step use of those words in today’s political campaigns while unmistakably advocating the election or defeat of a candidate,” said Ethics and Accountability Division Administrator Jonathan Becker. “This amendment will close the regulatory loophole.”

The rule will go to the State Legislature for review. If there are no objections, the rule will take effect the first day of the month after it is published in the Wisconsin Administrative Register.

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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. Additional information about the mission of the G.A.B. may be obtained by telephone at **1-608-266-8005**, by electronic mail at **[gab@wi.gov](mailto:gab@wi.gov)**, or through the Internet at **<http://gab.wi.gov>**.