

# Wisconsin Elections

Elections Division

News from the WISCONSIN GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY BOARD

April 2009

## Clerks Begin Use of Wisconsin Election Data Collection System Following April 7 Election

Local election officials in Wisconsin are using a new system for collecting election data after the Wisconsin April 7 Spring Election. For the first time, local election officials across the state are using online reporting through the Wisconsin Election Data Collection System (WEDCS) to submit statistics to the State.

Elections Division staff have trained local clerks to use the new system, which should make data collection more efficient and timely. Funding for the project comes from a U.S. Election Assistance Commission grant awarded to Wisconsin in May 2008. In mid-March, the Division announced incentive grants to municipalities which totaled more than \$500,000.

On March 27, Division staff submitted to the EAC the Election Day Report from November 4, 2008, election, for which State staff employed the new system for inputting data. The *Election and Voting Registration Statistics Report* (form GAB-190) is used to collect the data in Wisconsin and was updated for the new collection system.

## Government Accountability Board Puts Early Voting "On the Table"

The Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) in late March adopted a staff report on the possible introduction of early voting in Wisconsin. The Board also ask staff to seek comment and suggested changes from the public and state legislators.

The report presents three options for changing the current system of pre-Election Day (absentee) voting in Wisconsin: 1) simply streamlining the absentee voting process; 2) allowing individual municipalities to opt into an early voting system; or 3) conducting early voting through a system of regional districts throughout the state.

An early voting pilot has been recommended for spring 2010. The report, *An Examination of Early Voting in Wisconsin*, will soon be posted in the "What's New" section of the Elections Division homepage at <http://gab.wi.gov>.

## Registration System Improvements Prioritized By Elections Division

Early this year, the Wisconsin Elections Division established a committee to study performance of the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) and make improvements.

On February 25 and March 25, the Division hosted feedback meetings for local election officials to discuss various aspects of SVRS performance. Three more feedback sessions are scheduled in Eau Claire, Outagamie, and Racine counties.

After Division staff gathers all suggested changes and improvements to the system, they will be prioritized and put into a Request for Information and Request for Service to contract for an upgrade to the system.

## Data Quality Improvements Proceed Through Voter Record Maintenance and Retroactive "HAVA Checks"

G.A.B. staff has completed a Four-Year Voter Record Maintenance process to improve voter data quality for Wisconsin. The State mailed 313,205 "Notice of Suspension of Registration" postcards in February to check status of voters who had not voted in four years. Of those, 58 percent returned as "undeliverable," 37 percent were not returned, and 5 percent requested continuation.

The Elections Division inactivated the voter records of individuals who did not respond and will send a list of inactivated voters to each municipality.

Continuing with its voter data improvement efforts, Division staff will begin a retroactive "HAVA Check" process on May 1 to verify the records of voters who registered on or after January 1, 2006 but before August 6, 2008 (when the HAVA Check became available), against Department of Transportation or Social Security Administration data.

Both processes followed protocols developed with input from election officials, which are available on the Elections Division homepage at: <http://gab.wi.gov>. A full report on the "HAVA Check" process, *A Statistical Analysis of HAVA Checks in Wisconsin*, is also posted to the homepage.