

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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State to Begin Retroactive Voter Record Checks

MADISON, WI – The Government Accountability Board's (G.A.B.) Elections Division will commence retroactive cross-checking of voter records in early May. The purpose of these comparisons is to update voter information in the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS).

“Our system is only as good as the information it contains,” said Kevin Kennedy, G.A.B. Director and General Counsel. “The HAVA Check process is a tool that helps election officials improve voter data quality,” Kennedy continued.

The HAVA Check procedure will be carried out in accordance with a ruling by the G.A.B. to compare all new voter records with Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) data or Social Security Administration (SSA) data.

The Board began examining the “HAVA Check” impact in July 2008, and after four of the six judges’ HAVA Checks failed, the Board refrained from arbitrarily disqualifying voters whose information did not exactly match with other databases. Rather, the Board directed its staff to gather and study the facts on why voter data crossed-checked with DOT or SSA databases, did not match.

At its August, October and December meetings, the G.A.B. repeatedly reaffirmed its decision to avoid disenfranchising voters without first obtaining the facts. At its January 2009 meeting, the Board received and adopted a statistical analysis report that showed almost 90% of all voter records matched, and of those that did not, almost all were due to a variation in name or typographical error – not fraud.

The Board also approved a protocol, including uniform standards for conducting HAVA Checks, to begin in early May. Records put into the system between January 1, 2006 and August 5, 2008, will be cross-checked. Any record that entered the system on August 6 or thereafter, already has been automatically compared.

Voters whose registration information does not match on name, date of birth, driver’s license number or Social Security number will receive a letter from the Elections Division asking them to contact the agency to help correct the record. There may an error in the SVRS, or in rare cases, the DOT or SSA record may require correction or updating.

“We are proceeding based on the facts and in accordance with the G.A.B. directive. Our goal is to obtain even more complete and accurate data for the next Wisconsin election,” said Elections Division Administrator Robinson. “Remember, a non-match does not make a voter ineligible. It simply means information differs between the databases,” Robinson continued. Implementation of the HAVA Check protocol is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

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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**, or through the Internet at **<http://gab.wi.gov>**.