

State of Wisconsin \ Government Accountability Board

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DATE: May 7, 2009

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

FROM: Nathaniel E. Robinson
Elections Division Administrator
Government Accountability Board

SUBJECT: Summer Data Quality Initiatives: HAVA Checks and Voter Matching

Dear County and Municipal Clerks,

Now that the 2009 Spring Election cycle is coming to a close, there are opportunities to improve the quality of the data in the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) before the next election cycle! The G.A.B. is planning several data quality initiatives related to the SVRS Data Interfaces, to give clerks the opportunity to improve the accuracy of their voter records in SVRS. While G.A.B. will be kicking off these initiatives shortly, clerks will have the next several months to work on these, and can take their time and make thoughtful and appropriate updates as necessary. The upcoming data quality initiatives are:

Retroactive HAVA Checks

At the January meeting of the Government Accountability Board, a Protocol was approved for performing retroactive HAVA Checks on voters who registered on or after January 1, 2006, but before August 6, 2008 (when the HAVA Checks became available in SVRS). In order to ensure uniformity and consistency, G.A.B. staff will be performing these checks. The checks will begin the week of **May 11, and will continue through the month of June**, until all checks are complete.

The HAVA Checks will be performed county by county in descending order based on the population of the county. All municipalities in a county will be done together to ease the coordination between providers and relies. Once the HAVA Checks in a given county are performed, clerks may see new voters appearing on their HAVA Check report.

After the checks are complete, G.A.B. will be mailing DMV Ping letters to those voters whose HAVA Check results in a non-match, instructing the voter to contact the G.A.B. to have their information updated. These letters will be sent out in early July for those municipalities who wish to have letters sent right away, or in September for those municipalities who would like time to work on the non-matches before their letters are sent.

In order to ensure the maximum efficiency and the minimum confusion for this process, it is important that clerks finish entering all their Election Day Registrations (EDR), and corresponding HAVA Checks for the Spring Election BEFORE this process begins. **Please make sure that all EDRs are entered prior to May 11, 2009.**

G.A.B. will continue to update clerks as the Retroactive HAVA Check process continues. For more information on the Retroactive HAVA Check Protocol, please refer to the documents on the G.A.B. website at: <http://elections.state.wi.us/docview.asp?docid=15857&locid=47>.

Death Matching

G.A.B. and DET staff have made improvements to accuracy of the death matching process. These updates will take place in **mid-May 2009**, and will take approximately one week. Because of these improvements, clerks will begin to see many new death record matches to be reviewed and updated. While many death matches will be created during that week, clerks should take their time reviewing these matches and taking appropriate action. It is recommended that clerks focus initially on matches with voters who are in Active status, to ensure that poll books are accurate.

Duplicate Voter Matching

As you may remember, the new version of SVRS (version 6.6) installed in March included improvements to the duplicate voter matching. The new matching process is more accurate in determining which matched record is the most recent, and in which municipality the match should appear. All new matches that have been created since this update was made were based on the improved criteria. However, thousands of unconfirmed duplicate voter matches still appear in SVRS that were created before this change was put into place.

To ensure that all duplicate voter matches are as accurate as possible, clerks are advised to refrain from making duplicate matches for the time being. G.A.B. will be taking all of the current unconfirmed duplicate voter matches in SVRS, and running them through voter matching again, using the new criteria. This will result in more accurate duplicate voter matches, and should minimize occurrences of clerks merging a more recent voter record into an older less current record.

This process will take place **after the death matching improvements are complete, and will also take approximately one week.** As this process occurs, municipalities may see new duplicate voter matches in their municipality, and they may no longer see other unconfirmed matches that no longer appear in their municipality. As with the death matches, many new matches may be created during this period, but clerks are advised to take their time and do the appropriate research before merging records. It is also advised that clerks begin with duplicate matches that involve voters in Active status.

As always, the G.A.B. appreciates all the hard work that clerks put in to make the SVRS data as clean and accurate as possible. As Kevin Kennedy has said, "The system is only as good as the data it contains," so the integrity of the SVRS is in the hands of **you**, Wisconsin's dedicated and hard-working clerks! Thank you for your continued support and cooperation.