

# Government Accountability Board

## State of Wisconsin

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## Wisconsin Gets More High Marks for Elections

MADISON, WI – Wisconsin fares very well in a recent report on elections in the United States published by American University’s Center for Democracy and Election Management.

The report hails Wisconsin as “the only state with independent and nonpartisan election management at the state level.” Wisconsin also gets high marks as the best in military and overseas voting and election management, and is listed as one of the four best states with respect to voting technology and audits. Wisconsin is at the pinnacle for state election management, getting a perfect score.

“Wisconsin continues to be recognized at the national level and looked to as a leader and innovator in elections,” said Kevin J. Kennedy, director and general counsel of the Government Accountability Board, which administers elections in Wisconsin. “Our goal is to ensure fairness, transparency and public confidence in the integrity of the election process. This report is a very positive reflection on the administration of elections in Wisconsin, the Government Accountability Board and its staff.”

The report, “The State of Elections in the 50 States: Evaluating the Process Where It Counts,” is available online at <http://www1.american.edu/ia/cdem/pubs/reports.cfm>

The authors use the recommendations of the Carter/Baker Commission to create a democracy index as a basis for evaluating the states, and Wisconsin fares very well in the analysis. The report does not list a ranking for each state but breaks out its analysis in 10 categories: voter registration; voter ID; provisional voting; voting technology and audits; early voting, vote by mail and vote centers; military and overseas voting; voter education and felon re-enfranchisement; election management; and poll workers. It lists the best, average and worst in all categories except voter ID, voter education and felon re-enfranchisement.

The American University report comes on the heels of a Big Ten Battleground Poll in which Wisconsinites said they were very satisfied with their voting experience 90 percent of the time, while other Big Ten states averaged 85 percent, and the rest of the nation as a whole 86 percent.

The poll compared Wisconsin voters’ opinions with those in the Big Ten states and a nationwide sample. Wisconsin voters were also more likely to be very confident that their ballots had been counted as they intended: 87 percent of voters in Wisconsin were very confident, while 82 percent in other Big Ten states and 83 percent in the rest of the nation felt the same.

Excerpts from the American University report:

*“The challenge with ranking states on voting technology lies in the wide variation in auditing requirements. In general, Minnesota, Washington, Missouri and Wisconsin rank at the top because they have the most comprehensive auditing requirements and meet other voting technology standards. Wisconsin and Missouri are among the few states to allow nonpartisan election observers....”*

-- pg. 18

*“While a state like Indiana meets all of the other recommendations of the Carter-Baker Commission on overseas voting, it is not ranked at the top because it allows ballots to be returned electronically, which violates the secrecy of the ballot. Wisconsin comes closest to the Commission’s recommendations as it allows ballots to be sent electronically to voters (but requires that they be returned by mail) and will count ballots received up to ten days after an election if they are postmarked by Election Day. However, Wisconsin does not make regular ballots available until 30 days prior to an election, though it does provide special write-in ballots up to 90 days beforehand.”*

-- pg. 22

*“On the positive side, several states have adopted and many states have had long-standing prohibitions against partisan activity by state and local election officials/employees. Still, Wisconsin remains the only state with independent and nonpartisan election management at the state level. Also, while HAVA indicated a preference for the states to centralize the electoral process, local election officials retain significant authority.”*

-- pg. 26

*“Wisconsin is the only state in which elections are managed by a nonpartisan, independent election board. That qualifies it for the highest ranking.”*

-- pg. 28

For more information on the Big Ten poll, see:

<http://elections.state.wi.us/docview.asp?docid=16566&locid=47>

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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>**.