

Retroactive HAVA Checks

Frequently Asked Questions

Prepared by the Government Accountability Board Staff

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Voter Questions

The following questions and answers are targeted to the Voter audience.

What do the following terms mean?

- **SVRS** – The Statewide Voter Registration System. This is the computer system used to track and maintain voter registration information for the State of Wisconsin.
- **HAVA** – The Help America Vote Act of 2002. This federal law made sweeping changes to elections administration, and was passed in response to the difficulties reported in the 2000 Presidential Election.
- **G.A.B.** – The Government Accountability Board. This is a non-partisan Board charged with administering Wisconsin’s campaign finance, ethics, and election laws. G.A.B. staff carries out the Board’s mission and administrative duties.
- **DOT** – The Department of Transportation. This is a State agency that is responsible for many areas related to transportation, including issuance of driver licenses to Wisconsin’s drivers. DOT also issues State ID cards, which serve as an official government identification card for Wisconsin residents who do not drive.
- **SSA** – Social Security Administration. This is a Federal agency that administers the Social Security program in the United States. SSA is responsible for issuance of Social Security Numbers, which serve as nationally recognized identification numbers.

What is a HAVA Check?

HAVA Checks are required by the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), and cross-check voter registration information with driver license or social security records. These checks help detect errors and improve the accuracy of the data in the voter registration system.

What information is checked in the HAVA Check?

The HAVA Check compares the voter’s name, date of birth, and “identifying number”. Your identifying number is your driver license number, State ID number, or the last four digits of your Social Security Number. If you have a driver license or State ID number,

your information is cross-checked with information at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. If you do not have a driver license or State ID card, then your information is cross-checked with information at the Social Security Administration.

What if I don't have a driver license?

If you do not have a driver license, you can provide your State ID card number. If you do not have a State ID card, you can use the last four digits of your social security number.

What will the G.A.B. do with my information?

The information is only used to validate voter registration information. By statute, dates of birth, driver license numbers, State ID numbers, and social security numbers are confidential and can only be viewed by election officials. This information cannot be released or shared with outside vendors, or the general public.

Why are these checks being run now?

HAVA Checks were required beginning in 2006, but the checks did not become available through Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) until August of 2008. This summer G.A.B. staff performed "Retroactive HAVA Checks" to catch up with those voters who did not get the required check when they registered.

What happens if my information doesn't match?

If your information does not match, you will still be able to vote as you always have. However, some of your information may not be correct in the system. Correcting this information reduces the risk of your record being incorrectly matched with another voter with a similar name or identifying information.

Clerk Questions

The following questions and answers are targeted to the Clerk audience.

What is a Retroactive HAVA Check?

“Retroactive HAVA Checks” are HAVA Checks for voters who registered on or after January 1, 2006, when the HAVA Checks became required by federal law, but before August of 2008 when the checks became available in the SVRS. G.A.B. staff performed the Retroactive HAVA Checks according to a protocol that was approved by the Government Accountability Board at its public meeting in January of 2009. G.A.B. staff are sending letters to all voters whose retroactive check resulted in a non-match. The letter instructs the voter to contact the G.A.B. to have their information verified.

What is a HAVA Check non-match?

A non-match means that the information in SVRS does not match the information at DOT or SSA. The HAVA Check compares the name, date of birth, and identifying number (driver license number, State ID number, or social security number). If one or more of these fields does not match, then the check results in a non-match. A non-match can be seen in SVRS by looking at the ID Check Response field. Partial Match, No Match Found, or Problem Completing HAVA Check all indicate a non-match. DOT also provides additional details regarding why a HAVA Check resulted in a non-match. These details appear on the WI HAVA Check report and include descriptions such as Name does not match, No record of DL #, Date of Birth does not match, or Name and Date of Birth do not match.

Does a non-match impact my poll list or absentee listing?

A HAVA Check non-match does not impact the poll list or absentee list in any way. A voter who has a non-match can still vote at the polls or absentee as they always have. No indication or notation is made on the poll list or the absentee listing related to the result of HAVA Checks.

What do I do with the Retroactive HAVA Check non-matches?

Clerks do not necessarily need to do anything with their non-matches. G.A.B. is sending letters to all voters whose check resulted in a non-match, asking the voter to contact the G.A.B. to verify their information. However, not all voters will respond to the letters, so clerks are encouraged to review their non-matches to see if there are any errors that can be easily fixed. A simple way to investigate non-matches is to compare the information on the non-match report to the information on the voter’s most recent EB-131, to identify any clerical or typographical errors. For clerks who would like to investigate further, we recommend contacting the voter, and asking them to look at their actual driver license or State ID card so you can validate the information as it appears on the license.

What does “Name does not match” really mean?

There are many reasons why a voter’s name in SVRS may not match the name at DOT. The information is entered into two entirely separate databases, from separate forms, that the voter fills out at different times. The separate agencies have different rules and data entry standards. With that in mind, there are several common reasons why the name does not match:

1. Nicknames – some voters may have used a nickname on their EB-131 rather than their full name. DOT tends to use full first names. For example, ROBERT versus BOB.
2. Middle initials or middle names – a voter may have a middle initial or middle name on their driver license, but not in SVRS.
3. Double first names – a voter may have a first name of MARY SUE at DOT but have a first name of MARY and a middle name of SUE in SVRS.
4. Voters who use their middle names – some voters may go by their middle name commonly, but have their legal first and middle name on their driver license. For example, the driver license may show RICHARD THOMAS SMITH, but SVRS may show R THOMAS SMITH or simply THOMAS SMITH.
5. Names with hyphens or spaces – the voter may appear one way on their driver license and a different way in SVRS. For example, JOHNSON SMITH versus JOHNSON-SMITH
6. Names beginning with MC or VAN – the voter may have a space after the prefix, or not. For example, MCKINLEY versus MC KINLEY, or VAN HOLLEN versus VANHOLLEN.
7. Names with apostrophes – many voters with apostrophes in their names were entered into DOT’s database with a space instead of an apostrophe. For example, O LEARY versus O’LEARY.

What should I do to “fix” the name if it does not match?

G.A.B. recommends updating the voter’s name in SVRS to appear as it does on his or her driver license, in accordance with the instructions on the EB-131. Many clerks have expressed that they do not want to change voters’ last names because they may appear in different places on the poll book from their family members, which creates confusion on election day. Some clerks may choose to change the last name back after the HAVA Check to ensure consistency on the poll book. This is not prohibited, as long as the name is correct. Please note though that if the voter indicates that their legal name appears a certain way, then that is the way it should appear in SVRS. Do not knowingly enter incorrect information into SVRS. Some clerks have also tried multiple variations of

problematic names in an effort to achieve a match. This is not recommended. Simply updating the name in SVRS to match the driver license is sufficient. If the check still results in a non-match, no further action is needed.

What if the voter has a State ID card instead of a Driver License?

The State ID number is used exactly like the driver license number. If the voter does not have a driver license but they do have a State ID number, run the HAVA Check using the State ID number. It is entered into SVRS in the same field as the driver license number. The last four digits of the social security number should only be used if the voter does not have a driver license or State ID card.

What if the Driver License or State ID card has incorrect information?

If information such as the name or date of birth is wrong on the driver license, instruct the voter to contact DOT to get their information corrected. Do not knowingly enter incorrect information into SVRS.

What if the voter had the HAVA Check run on their SSN, but they have a driver license or State ID card?

If the voter has a driver license or State ID card, the HAVA Check should be run using that. Some voters registered using the last four digits of the SSN because they didn't have their driver license number with them, or because it was shorter, or for other reasons. Per the Wisconsin Administrative Code and the instructions on the EB-131, voters must provide their driver license number if they have one. If they do not have one, they can use their State ID number. They should only use the last four digits of the SSN if they do not have a driver license or State ID card. The matching process also appears to be more accurate when using driver license or State ID cards versus SSN's.

When are DMV Ping Letters being sent?

Approximately 85,000 DMV Ping Letters will be going out around July 31, 2009. Around 600 municipalities asked to have their Ping Letters sent in September instead, to allow time to investigate and correct non-matches. Letters for those municipalities will be sent in September, and will only be sent to voters who still show a non-match at the time the letters are generated. We estimate around 20,000 letters will be sent in the September batch.

How are the Retroactive HAVA Check DMV Ping Notification letters different from the standard DMV Ping Notification letters?

The Retroactive HAVA Check DMV Ping Letters are based on the standard DMV Ping Letter, with some added information regarding the retroactive HAVA Checks. The key difference is that the Retroactive HAVA Check DMV Ping Letter asks the voter to contact the G.A.B. rather than the local clerk.

What do I do if the voter contacts me instead of the G.A.B.?

Local clerks can take those calls from their voters if they would like to, and follow the standard process used for responses to standard DMV Ping Letters. Clerks can also direct the voter to contact the G.A.B. at 608-261-2028.

What will G.A.B. do when the voters call?

G.A.B. staff will ask the voter to verify the information as it appears on their driver license, update the voter record in SVRS as necessary, and rerun the HAVA Check. G.A.B. staff will log all updates made to voter records, and will send those updates to the clerks.

How will I know which voters were updated and what the changes were, if G.A.B. is the one making the changes?

G.A.B. staff will provide clerks with details on which voters in their jurisdictions were updated as a result of a voter response to a Retroactive HAVA Check DMV Ping Notification letter, and what specifically was updated.

What happens to the voters that do not respond to the Ping Letter?

There are no consequences to the voter if they do not respond to the Ping letter. Their voter status will remain active and they will still be able to vote at the polls or absentee as they normally do. Their voter record will continue to appear as a non-match.

What if I requested that DMV Ping Letters be sent in September instead?

If you requested that your letters be sent in September, letters for the voters in your municipality will be sent in September rather than in the batch being sent on July 31, 2009. Please continue to make corrections to your voters, and rerun the HAVA Check. Voters who are corrected and become a complete match will not be sent a letter in September. We will only send letters to those voters who still show a non-match in September when the letters are sent.

If you are not sure if your letters are being sent in September or not, please contact the G.A.B. Help Desk at 608-261-2028 or gabhelpdesk@wi.gov and they can check.

What is the timeline to complete the Retroactive HAVA Check project?

The Retroactive HAVA Check project will officially be concluded in December when G.A.B. staff present the final report to the Government Accountability Board at their December 14, 2009 meeting. There are several project milestones that will be completed in the meantime. The Retroactive HAVA Checks were completed on June 5, 2009. The July 2009 batch of DMV Ping Notification letters will be sent on July 31, 2009.

The September 2009 batch of DMV Ping Notification letters will be sent by September 30, 2009. Updates to voter records based on responses to the DMV Ping Notification letters are anticipated to continue throughout the project, as voters respond to the letters, with a goal of having the updates completed by November 15, 2009.

G.A.B staff recognize that voters may continue to respond to the letters after that, and we will continue to make the appropriate updates, however those voters may not be included in the final report, and the project will be considered complete once the final report is presented to the Board on December 14, 2009.