

State of Wisconsin \ Government Accountability Board

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Government Accountability Board Statement on Data Availability and Data Quality

Data Availability

Municipalities are required to update voter participation and elections data in the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) within 45 days of a general election, and 30 days of all other elections. The Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) will notify those who request data beyond the 30 or 45 days after an election, as applicable, if the data is incomplete. Statewide voter participation and elections data is available from September 2006 to present. Information from February 2006, and April 2006, reflect only the jurisdictions in 21 counties that were using the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) during those elections.

The price for data from the SVRS is \$25 plus \$5 per 1000 voter records (\$5 for up to the first thousand, and then rounded to the nearest thousand thereafter). The price for printed data from the SVRS is an additional \$0.25 per page, plus the cost of postage and shipping. The system is constantly updated, so it is necessary to query the system before a price for a file can be provided. The maximum charge for SVRS data is \$12,500. See Wis. Stat. §6.36(6) and Section GAB 3.50, Wis. Adm. Code, for additional information about charges for SVRS data.

Quotes are valid for 15 days from the time they are produced. The G.A.B. reserves the right to re-estimate the quote after the 15-day period due to the fluidity of the data. The G.A.B. strives to provide quotes within 1-2 business days of receiving the request. The G.A.B. also works to provide the requested data within 5-7 business days of receiving payment.

There is no charge for quantity-only data (data without individual identifiers, e.g. the number of registered voters in a municipality, or the number of absentee ballots cast in a particular county during a particular election), unless the request would require creating a custom report. There is also no charge for data from the Wisconsin Elections Data Collection System (WEDCS) regarding election voting and registration statistics, and election cost tracking. This information is available on the G.A.B. website at <http://gab.wi.gov/elections-voting/statistics>. Data from WEDCS is available for all statewide elections beginning with the 2008 General Election. For data not yet posted on the website listed above, please contact the G.A.B. Data Request Team by email at GABdata@wi.gov, or by phone at (608) 261-2028.

Some information about voters is considered confidential, and can only be shared for law enforcement purposes, or official purposes of other government entities. As outlined in Wis. Stat. §6.36(1)(b), certain information cannot be released to the public, which includes:

- Date of birth
- Driver license or DOT-issued identification number
- Social Security Account Number
- The name or address of a confidential voter (see Wis. Stat. §6.47(3))
- An indication of a required accommodation to vote

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Data Quality

In Wisconsin, elections are conducted at neither the state nor county level. Arguably, Wisconsin has the most decentralized elections administration systems in the nation. There are 1,852 municipalities and 72 counties in Wisconsin. The G.A.B. is charged by State law to maintain the official voter records and statistics, in Wis. Stat. §6.36(1). Responsibility for entering accurate information into SVRS and the Wisconsin Elections Data Collection System (WEDCS), however, resides with the individual municipal clerk or election commission, per Wis. Stats. §§ 6.275, 6.276, and 6.33(5).

Election cost data are provided by each municipality and county for each statewide election. G.A.B. staff asks that clerks provide these data based on actual paid invoices or the clerk's best available information (i.e. unpaid invoices, accepted bids, etc.) within the required reporting period. As clerks receive updates, they may revise their reports. The cost reporting is part of collecting elections statistics, and is intended to provide a greater understanding about the costs of conducting elections. Collecting these data allows the G.A.B to provide detailed reports to the State Legislature, the media, voters, and the general public about elections throughout the State of Wisconsin, and will assist municipalities to prepare and budget for elections.

These figures should not be construed as a complete accounting of audited election-related expenses. The G.A.B. has published instructions on completing the election cost report, but clerks may interpret these instructions and report expenditures differently. In addition, cost data may be incomplete and reflect the information available when the data was reported. While initial reports are due 30 days after an election, municipal and county clerks have the ability to update their data as more specific information becomes available.

The G.A.B. is dedicated to maintaining the highest possible voter data quality and accurate elections statistics. Every effort is made to assure their accuracy and completeness. Given the complexity of Wisconsin's elections administration structure and business processes, despite best efforts and quality control management practices, some residual data error resulting from compilation by multiple partners may sometimes occur. Reviewers of Wisconsin's voter participation and elections data are encouraged to contact the G.A.B if errors or omissions in the data are discovered.