

State of Wisconsin \ Elections Board

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DATE: July 19, 2005

TO: Robert J. Marchant, Senate Chief Clerk
Patrick Fuller, Assembly Chief Clerk

FROM: Kevin J. Kennedy, Executive Director *KJK*
State Elections Board

SUBJECT: 2003 Wisconsin Act 98, Election Officials

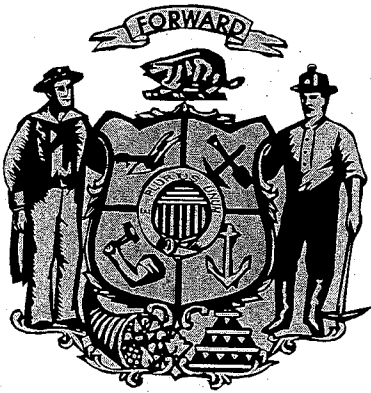
Pursuant to the requirements of 2003 Wisconsin Act 98, enclosed is the State Elections Board report on the compensation, recruitment and training of elections officials. This report is submitted for distribution to the appropriate standing committees in the manner provided under S. 13.172(3), Stats.

If you have any questions regarding the submittal of this report, please contact me directly at 608-266-8087 or kevin.kennedy@seb.state.wi.us.

Enclosure

cc: Senator Joseph Leibham, Chair
Special Committee on Election Law Review
✓ Robert J. Conlin, Senior Staff Attorney
Legislative Council

Report on the Compensation, Recruitment and Training of Election Officials



Wisconsin State Elections Board

June 2005

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BACKGROUND

Poll workers are an integral part of the election process in Wisconsin. Throughout this report, the term poll worker is used as an alternative to the term election inspector, which is used in the state statutes. At the polling place the one poll worker who has gone through the training and has been certified is called a chief inspector. They are the individuals who make the process work at the most fundamental level of election administration. The State Legislature recognizes this and required, in the 2003 Wisconsin Act 98, that the State Elections Board prepare the following report on the recruitment, training, certification and compensation of poll workers throughout the state.

A variety of methods were used in gathering the information for the report including conducting a survey of county and municipal clerks and interviewing election agencies in other states. The statistics provided give an in-depth view of the status of poll workers across the state, while the qualitative data provides ideas for the future. A draft of this report was posted on the Website of the State Elections Board in order to solicit feedback from the public and clerks. The comments which were received have been incorporated into the final report.

A sentiment which repeatedly occurred in the survey was the appreciation that clerks have for their poll workers. These are individuals who sit through an often long day and do their job with a high level of dedication and many come back and serve their community every year for many years. It is the Board's hope that this report will lead to an improved understanding of the role and importance of poll workers in Wisconsin, to see where there is room for improvement and gain some new ideas on improving the process for the future.

RELEVANT STATE STATUTES

Wisconsin Election Administration Plan

In 2002, the State Elections Board adopted the Wisconsin State Plan which outlined the future plan for the state in terms of its elections administration, pursuant to S. 5.05(10), Wis. Stats. The plan was required for Wisconsin to be compliant with the Help America Vote Act and receive federal funds associated with the act. The plan included information on the new Statewide Voter Registration System as well as the Board's strategy for training of election officials.

Compensation

The State does not currently set a required wage for poll workers or Chief Inspectors, rather it is set by each local municipality. S. 7.03, Wis. Stats., states that a poll worker must be paid a "reasonable daily compensation" for their work on election day and for any training they are required to attend. The Wisconsin Towns Association has issued an opinion that municipalities should pay poll workers at least minimum wage. There is a provision in S. 7.03, Wis. Stats., that a poll worker can waive any compensation and volunteer their time. This is done with a written document submitted to the clerk.

Training

The State Elections Board is responsible for conducting regular administrative meetings and conferences for election officials, which according to S. 5.05(7), Wis. Stats., "shall be designed to explain the election laws and the forms and rules of the board, to promote uniform procedures and to assure that clerks and other officials are made aware of the integrity and importance of the vote of each citizen." The municipal clerks also have a responsibility to train the poll workers in their municipality, per S. 7.15(1)(e), Wis. Stats., and assist the State Elections Board in any training it does, per S. 7.15(11), Wis. Stats.

In 2001 S. 7.31, Wis. Stats., was created, which requires that each polling place have a "certified chief inspector." This chief inspector is required to attend an initial training from the State Elections Board and attend subsequent trainings to maintain their certification. The State Elections Board set a policy which detailed that the required subsequent trainings would be six hours. There are no other statutes which require poll worker training.

Recruiting

Each municipal clerk is responsible for staffing the polling place of their municipality. In December of even-numbered years, the governing body for a municipality selects poll workers to serve for a two-year term. The major political parties in a municipality are supposed to submit names, to the local municipal clerk, of people in their party who would like to serve as a poll worker. Then the clerk and the municipality's governing body confirm appointment of poll workers from the provided lists. The majority of the municipal clerks however, do not receive a list from the major political parties. In this case, the poll workers who are chosen are unaffiliated with a party. This process is detailed in S. 7.30, Wis. Stats.

High School Poll Workers

S. 7.30(2)(am), Wis. Stats., provides the opportunity for 16-17 year olds to work as poll workers. There are a few stipulations before a high school student is allowed to work. First a clerk must obtain authorization from the principal of the student's high school and the parents of the student and the student must have a 3.0 grade point average.

Poll Workers Working in Shifts

If a municipality would like to allow its poll workers to work in shifts, it must pass an ordinance per S. 7.30(1), Wis. Stats.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

The majority of the statistics in this report were gathered through a survey conducted of municipal and county clerks during April 2005. A copy of the survey is attached in the appendices. Overall there was a 72 percent response rate from the municipal clerks with 1,346 municipalities completing the survey. The survey of the county clerks had a 69 percent response rate with 50 county clerks returning the surveys. Below is more detailed information about the respondents of the survey. Additionally, of the largest 50 municipalities, ranked by their population, all except two, the City of Sheboygan and the City of Muskego, responded to the survey. Please see the appendix for a county by county participation rate.

Respondents to the County Clerks' Survey

Ashland	Crawford	Manitowoc	Rusk
Brown	Dane	Marathon	Shawano
Burnett	Dodge	Marquette	Sheboygan.
Calumet	Florence	Outagamie	Taylor
Chippewa	Fond du Lac	Ozaukee	Walworth
Clark	Green Lake	Pepin	Waukesha
Columbia	Jefferson	Racine	Waupaca

Respondents' Years of Work Experience

<i>County Clerks</i>		
Less than 1 year	8	16%
1-3 years	7	14%
4-7 years	13	26%
8-11 years	9	18%
12 or more	13	26%
Didn't Respond	2	0.30%

<i>Municipal Clerks</i>		
Less than 1 year	75	6%
1-3 years	237	18%
4-7 years	313	23%
8-11 years	201	15%
12 or more	517	38%
Don't Know	4	0.30%

<i>Types of Municipalities that Responded</i>			
	# of Respondents	Total # of municipalities in this category	% of total municipalities in this category that responded
Towns	848	1265	67%
Villages	328	386	85%
Cities	171	190	90%

