

# League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

Appleton, Wisconsin  
May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014

# League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

## Wisconsin: Pioneering in Nonpartisan Election Administration

**Michael R. Haas**

Elections Division Administrator,  
Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

# G.A.B. Background



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CHICAGO  
**INSTITUTE  
OF POLITICS**

***“Democracy means everybody eligible to vote should vote; and should vote in an informed manner. And that we should have public confidence in the accuracy of a vote.”***

*-Judge Thomas Barland  
G.A.B. Chair*

# G.A.B. Background

- 2007 Wisconsin Act 1 merged the State Elections Board and Ethics Board
- Board consists of six former judges  
Nominated by Candidate Committee (composed of one Court of Appeals judge from each district chosen at random)
- Governor appointed and Legislature confirmed for staggered six-year terms

§§15.07(1)(cm), 15.60, Wis. Stats.

# G.A.B. Background

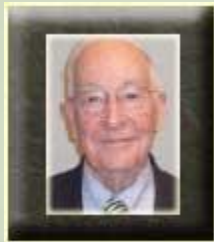
## Board Member Requirements

- Cannot be a member of a political party
- Cannot be candidate
- Cannot have made a contribution for 12 months before serving
- Cannot make a contribution while serving
- Cannot hold another office
- Cannot be a lobbyist



# G.A.B. Current Board Members

(Term expirations)



**Judge (Chair)**  
**Thomas Barland**  
(May 1, 2015)



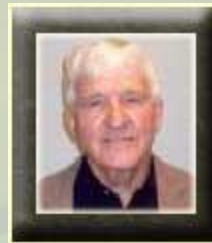
**Judge**  
**Harold V. Froehlich**  
(May 1, 2016)



**Judge**  
**Michael Brennan**  
(May 1, 2014)



**Judge**  
**Timothy Vocke**  
(May 1, 2017)



**Judge**  
**Gerald C. Nichol**  
(May 1, 2018)



**Judge**  
**Elsa Lamelas**  
(May 1, 2019)

# G.A.B. Background

## Board Staff Requirements

- Cannot be a member of a political party or participate in partisan political activity
- Cannot be candidate
- Cannot have made a contribution for 12 months before serving
- Cannot make a contribution while serving
- Cannot hold another office
- Cannot be a lobbyist
- Cannot circulate or sign nomination papers of county non-partisan candidates



# G.A.B. Background

## Elections & Ethics Board Staff

- GPR 17 & HAVA 26 positions\*
- Elections Division
  - 4 – General Purpose Revenue Funds (GPR)
  - 22 – Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funded
- Information System (IT) Developers
  - 7 – Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funded

\*Twenty-six G.A.B. positions federally funded – until 2017



# G.A.B. Background

## Elections Division

- Oversees administration of elections
- Trains and supports 1852 municipal clerks and 72 county clerks
- Ensures compliance with state and federal election laws
- Determines ballot eligibility for state and federal candidates
- Certifies election results for state and federal candidates
- Approves election equipment

# G.A.B. Background

## Elections Division

- Hosts and maintains Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) & the MyVote Wisconsin website
  - Provides information to create poll lists, candidate lists, polling place locations, and reports for clerks and the public
  - Allows voters to check registration status, ballot and polling place information online military and permanent overseas voters to request an absentee ballot
  - Allows military and permanent overseas voters to request an absentee ballot and access their absentee ballot online
- SVRS Providers & Reliers

# Election Landscape

## By the Numbers

- Wisconsin population: 5.7 million
- SVRS: 4.4 million voters, ~ 3.4 million currently eligible and registered voters
- 2010 General Election 2.19 million voters
- 2012 General Election 3.08 million voters
- 1852 municipal clerks, and 72 county clerks
- 35,000 poll workers at 2800 polling places
- Wisconsin has 2% of US population, but 4% of its election officials



# Elections Landscape

## By the Municipalities



*Wisconsin map  
with 1,852 local  
jurisdictions*

# Nonpartisan & Independent

## Elections Administration

*The G.A.B. must be:*

- Accessible
- Accountable
- Competent
- Responsive
- Transparent

---

**This builds Trust and Confidence.**

# Nonpartisan & Independent

## Elections Administration

- Independent election agency needs stature
- Independent election agency needs adequate resources

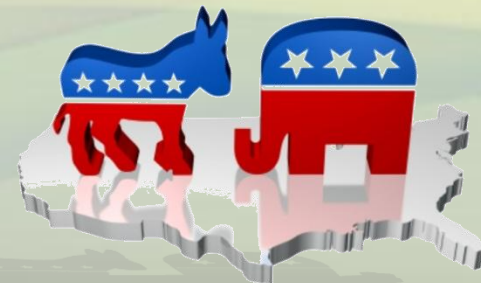
# Elections Landscape

## Wisconsin Election Administration

- Local Control



- Bipartisan Checks & Balances



# Partisan Environment

## Elections Administration



*Madison,  
2011*



# Partisan Environment

## Elections Administration

"If (Americans) wish to highlight a truth or develop an opinion by the encouragement of a great example, they form an association"

Alexis de Tocqueville



*Madison,  
2011*

# Election Administration

## Challenging Times

*2011-2012*

- ACT 10 Developments
- Impartial Justice Act
- Photo ID
- Statewide Recount
- Nine State Senate Recalls
- Recount Petition Review
- Redistricting
- Four More Senate Recalls
- Statewide Recount



# Wisconsin Voter Turnout



## General Elections

Presidential

Gubernatorial



3,081

70%



2,516

58%



2,185

50%



2,997

69%



2,167

51%



3,016

73%



1,786

44%



2,619

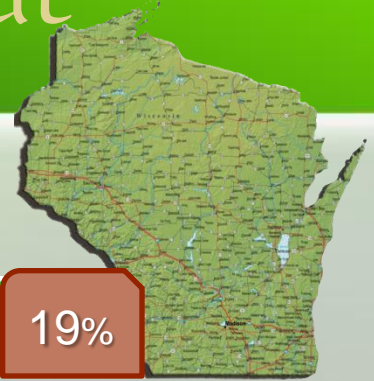
67%



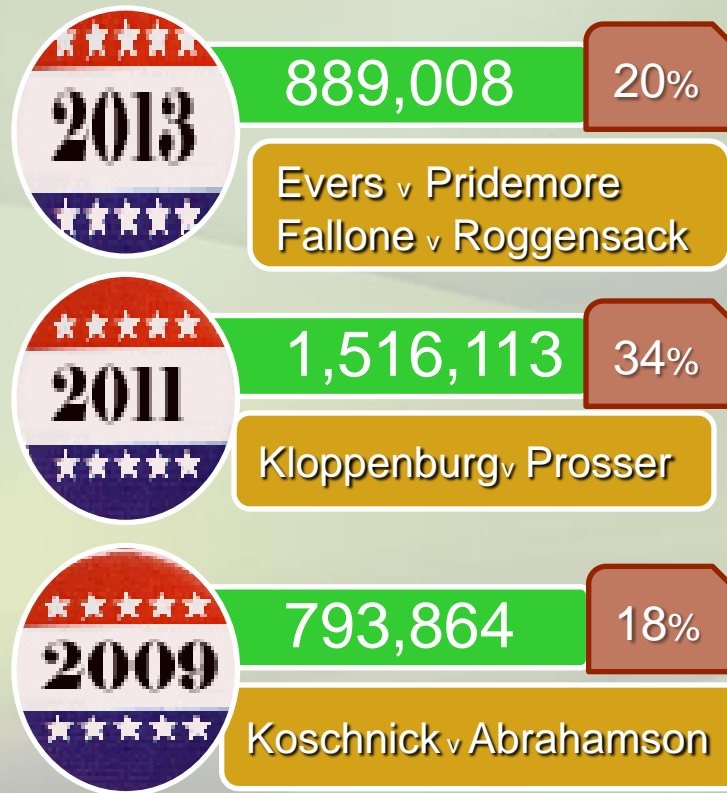
1,800

46%

# Wisconsin Voter Turnout

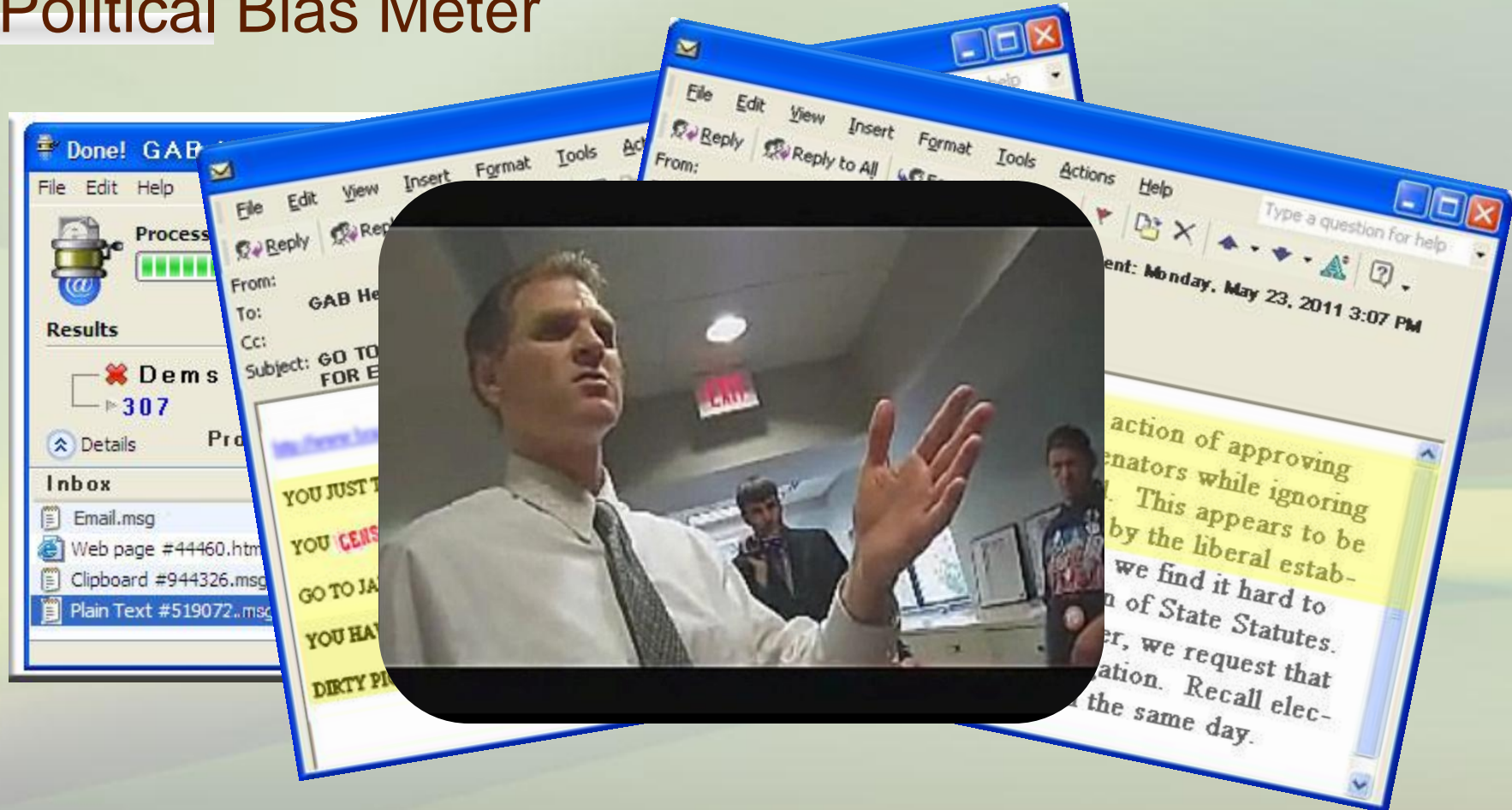


## Spring Elections



# Pioneering Initiatives

## Political Bias Meter



# Bipartisan Wisconsin

*Do you want ketchup or mustard with that?*



# Pioneering Initiatives

## Election Administration Topics



# Pioneering Initiatives

## Accessibility Audit Program

- Only State to conduct accessibility audits of actual polling set-up on Election Day
  - Parking and pathways
  - Entrances and interior routes
  - Elevators
  - Voting Area
- Use of technology to improve process





# Pioneering Initiatives



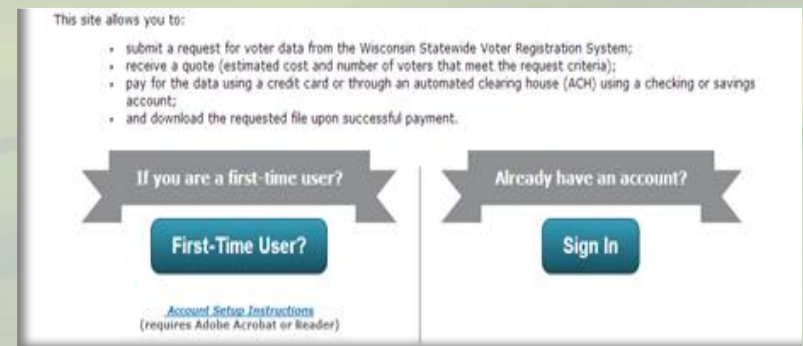
## Accessibility Audit Program

- Almost 2,000 audits completed in 1135 municipalities and 66 counties
- Audit reports generated and sent to municipal and county clerks
- Assistance with ideas for fixes
- Compilation of common problems and best practices
- Cited by Presidential Commission as a model for other states

# Pioneering Initiatives

## Badger Voters

- Website to request and obtain voter data from SVRS
- Purchased by candidates, parties and other organizations, researchers
- Mandatory charge under statute and administrative rules
- Automated process to:
  - Request one of six standard reports
  - Receive price quote
  - Make purchase of data
  - Download data



# Pioneering Initiatives

## Badger Voters

- Available 24/7
- Confidential data is protected
- Staff savings of 0.5 FTE
- Reduces process time from about 5 days to about 15 minutes for almost all requests



“Local jurisdictions can learn a lot from the State of Wisconsin, which, despite having the most decentralized election administration system in the country, also has one of the most thorough election data-gathering programs.”

PCEA

# Pioneering Initiatives

## Observer Rules

- Any member of the public, excluding a candidate, has the right to be present at a polling place to observe the public aspects of voting *§7.41, Wis. Stats.*
- Observer area now 3-8 feet from polling tables *§7.41, Wis. Stats.*
- Rules currently under legislative review



# Government Accountability Board

## Springtime in Wisconsin

***“The essence of being nonpartisan is to not care whether the complainant claims that you are political or not. You don’t worry about who’s criticizing you.”***

***-Judge Timothy Vocke***



# Contact Information



## Government Accountability Board

Agency Website: **GAB@wi.gov**

(608) 266-8005 for general inquiries

Voter Website: **MyVote@wi.gov**

212 East Washington Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

Post Office Box 7984

Madison, WI 53707-7984 USA