Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 5, 2020

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Important Things Voters Should Know After the Election

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Elections Commission today released its list of the top things Wisconsin voters should know after the General Election.

1. Wisconsin voters turned out in record numbers.

Unofficially, Wisconsin's voters cast 3,296,374 votes cast for president, the most ever in Wisconsin, smashing the record of 3,071,434 in 2012.

"I am so proud of Wisconsin's voters, not just for the record numbers with which they participated in their democracy, but for the peaceful, civil way they did it in this extremely challenging year," said Meagan Wolfe, administrator of the Wisconsin Elections Commission. "There were very few problems reported at polling places, which is a credit to our voters and our local election officials."

The state of Wisconsin has Election Day registration. This means that voters who may not have registered previously can register to vote at their polling place, increasing the number of voter registrations. Wolfe said that the number of paper registrations is reported as part of turnout by each of the local election officials. The law gives each of the 1,850 local election officials 45 days to enter this data into the statewide system, which then displays on the MyVote Wisconsin website (https://MyVote.wi.gov). After the 45 days, WEC is required to post election statistics, like the number of Election Day registrations to the public. The local election officials are also now in the process of certifying the election at the municipal, county, and then state level. Part of that process is ensuring that every voter participation entered has a corresponding, valid voter registration.

The unofficial turnout percentage of Wisconsin's 4,536,417 voting age population was 72.67%, which was not quite a record. The 2004 presidential election remains the high-water mark in terms of percentage turnout, because the voting age population was significantly lower. Wisconsin has historically been among the top states in terms of voter turnout percentage.

Year	Voting Age Population	General Election Voters	General Election Turnout
2020	4,536,417	3,296,374*	72.66%*
2016	4,461,068	3,004,051	67.34%
2012	4,378,741	3,071,434	70.14%
2008	4,330,695	2,996,869	69.20%
2004	4,118,621	3,016,288	73.24%
2000	3,908,533	2,619,184	67.01%

* Unofficial

Approximately 1.95 million of the votes cast in the election were absentee, according to preliminary data tracked in the statewide voter database, Wolfe said. Of those, approximately at least 651,195 were in-person absentee ballots cast at the clerk's office or a satellite voting location. Absentee voting reports and other data are available on the WEC's website: https://elections.wi.gov/elections-voting/statistics.

Some jurisdictions choose to report their turn out as percentage of registered voters. So for example, if a city has 100,000 registered voters headed into Election Day and 10,000 new voters register using Election Day registration, those jurisdictions sometimes report "110% turnout." The state reports turnout as percentage of the voting age population, which is the unofficial 72.65% number referenced above.

2. Voters concerned about whether their vote counted should not worry.

"Many voters are visiting our MyVote Wisconsin website to check their records," said Wolfe. "As allowed by state law, it can take 30 to 45 days for local clerks to record everyone's paper registrations and voter participation into the electronic statewide voter database. Please do not worry if you do not see your participation or registration recorded right away."
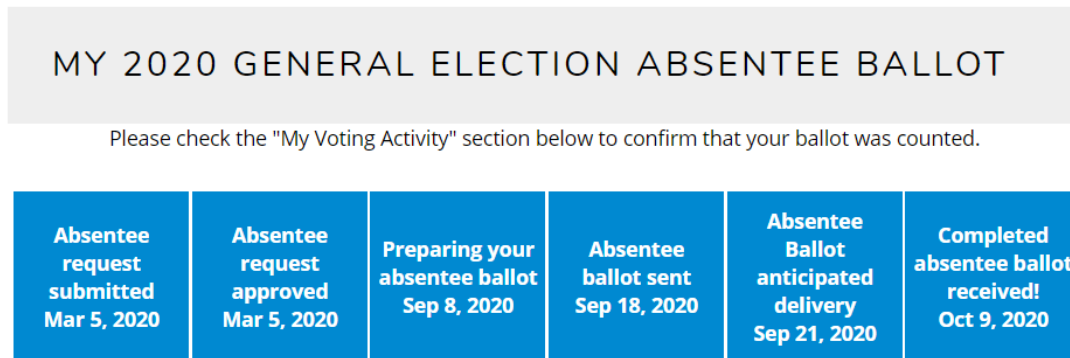
A message on the MyVote website informs voters how long it can take to enter participation:

MY VOTING ACTIVITY

If you voted in the November 3, 2020 Election, you will see your participation and confirmation that your ballot was counted, but it can take up to 45 days. Per state law, local election officials have 45 days to enter records into the system.

Aug 11, 2020 - 2020 Partisan Primary +

Apr 7, 2020 - 2020 Spring Election and Presidential Preference Vote +

Feb 18, 2020 - 2020 Spring Primary +

Wolfe said the MyVote website will continue to show voters whether their absentee ballot arrived. A voter whose ballot arrived will have a status bar that looks like this:

MY 2020 GENERAL ELECTION ABSENTEE BALLOT

Please check the "My Voting Activity" section below to confirm that your ballot was counted.

| Absentee request submitted Mar 5, 2020 | Absentee request approved Mar 5, 2020 | Preparing your absentee ballot Sep 8, 2020 | Absentee ballot sent Sep 18, 2020 | Absentee Ballot anticipated delivery Sep 21, 2020 | Completed absentee ballot received! Oct 9, 2020 |

If the last box (Completed absentee ballot received) is still gray, it could mean that data hasn't been entered in the system yet. "Many clerks are still catching up on data entry from the huge numbers of absentee ballots submitted," Wolfe said. There are more than 1,000 out of Wisconsin's 1,850 municipal clerks who do not have direct access to the statewide voter database, so they rely on their county clerk or a neighboring clerk to enter data, which can cause delays.

Wolfe noted that in the last three presidential elections, Wisconsin had among the lowest rates of mail ballot rejections and other problems in the nation, according to the Elections Performance Index, a state-by-state data monitoring project maintained by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

3. Voters should continue to seek out trusted sources of information about the election.

Many Wisconsin voters and people across the country have questions about how Wisconsin's unofficial election results are reported because of the closeness of the unofficial presidential election results and the time it took for some municipal clerks to complete counting of absentee ballots and report unofficial results to county clerks.

"Wisconsin's election was conducted according to law and in the open," Wolfe said. "Unfortunately, we are seeing a lot of misinformation on social media and some news media. If something you see or hear about how Wisconsin voted sounds outrageous, it's probably false."

Every step of the election process is publicly observable and transparent. This includes voting at the polls on Election Day and the counting of absentees. It also includes the canvass and certification of the tally that is happening right now in municipalities and counties across the state. Every ballots case in Wisconsin has a paper audit trail. Every voter registration and absentee request is maintained and available, within reason, for public inspection.

"Wisconsin doesn't have more votes than registered voters. It's impossible. There were no absentee ballots found in the middle of the night. Lawyers and observers for both political

parties were on-site and involved the entire time," Wolfe said. "Clerks followed the law and counted ballots until they were done."

It is also worth noting that 39 municipalities, including many of Wisconsin's largest cities, use the process outlined in law known as "central count" to count absentee ballots. This process is where all absentee ballots are counted at a central location rather than at each individual polling place. In these jurisdictions, you will see the results from polling places posted while central count ballots are still being tallied. Only when central count is complete, and every valid absentee has been counted, can they post the central count absentee numbers. This is why you will see a spike in ballots reported late in the process. Central count is publicly available and representatives from both parties observed the tally of these ballots, including the verification of the results posted, on Election Night and into Wednesday morning. You can learn more about central count and see a list of jurisdictions who use this process here https://elections.wi.gov/clerks/guidance/central-count-absentee.

4. If there is a recount, Wisconsin will be prepared.

According to unofficial results gathered from county clerk's websites, the margin of victory between the top two presidential candidates is 20,470 votes, or 0.62%, which makes the race eligible for recount if the losing candidate wishes to request one. Because the margin is more than 0.25%, the losing candidate must prepay the estimated costs of the recount at the time of requesting it. This number was calculated by adding the unofficial totals posted by each county, and a spreadsheet with the numbers is posted here: https://elections.wi.gov/node/7234. These numbers are not official as the election needs to be certified at the municipal and county level, and finally by the state on December 1.

The losing candidate cannot request a recount until after the last county reports its certified results to the state. The deadline for certified results is November 17, but the last report will likely come in earlier. For presidential recounts, the losing candidate has just one day to file for a recount. The Wisconsin Legislature changed this deadline from three days to one day following the 2016 presidential recount.

"Because of statements from the president's campaign and the tight deadlines, our staff is actively planning for a recount," Wolfe said. "We will also be coordinating with Wisconsin's 72 county clerks, who will have the primary responsibility for conducting the recounts."

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