

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Turnout about 13 percent for August 9 Partisan Primary

MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Elections Commission estimates turnout was approximately 13 percent of voting-age adults for the Partisan Primary Election on Tuesday, August 9. The commission had predicted 16 percent turnout.

The 13 percent estimate is based on unofficial, Election Night reports from county clerks. Official results will not be reported to the Elections Commission until early next week, and may not be certified and published until August 24. Statistical reports including the total number of ballots cast are not due until after Labor Day.

Approximately 572,000 votes were cast in the statewide U.S. Senate primaries, which is 12.8 percent of Wisconsin's 2016 voting-age population of 4,461,068.

“Calculating turnout based on unofficial vote totals is difficult in this primary because U.S. Senate was the only statewide office on the ballot, and only the Democratic Party had a contested race for its nomination,” said Michael Haas, Wisconsin's chief elections official. “Republicans and Libertarians did not have contested U.S. Senate primaries, so some voters may have skipped those candidates. After clerks file statistical reports which the total number of ballots cast, we will have a more complete picture of turnout, which may be slightly higher.”

Historically, the highest voter turnout in a fall partisan primary since 1960 was 27.9 percent in September 1964. Turnout in 2014 was 14.46 percent of the voting-age population. Statistics on past voter turnout and current voter registration are available at <http://gab.wi.gov/elections-voting/statistics>.

Haas urged caution in comparing the statewide turnout numbers to percentages reported by county and municipal clerks, who may be calculating based on the number of registered voters. Voting-age-population estimates for counties and municipalities are available from the state's Demographic Services Center: <http://www.doa.wi.gov/divisions/intergovernmental-relations/demographic-services-center/estimates>

“Overall, the primary ran smoothly due to the low turnout and lack of contested elections,” Haas said. “The Partisan Primary ballot can be a tricky one for voters to navigate and we also had the photo ID developments to deal with, but it appears that for the most part clerks and election inspectors were prepared and handled things well, which is a credit to them as well as to our staff.”

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The Wisconsin Elections Commission is responsible for administration and enforcement of election laws in Wisconsin. The Commission is made up of six Commissioners – four appointed directly by the State Senate Majority Leader, Speaker of the Assembly and the Minority Leaders in the State Senate and Assembly. The remaining two Commissioners are by the Governor with confirmation by the State Senate from lists of former municipal and county clerks submitted by the legislative leadership in each party.