

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Turnout 22.1% in August 14 Partisan Primary

MADISON, WI – Very few problems were reported in Tuesday’s Partisan Primary in which nearly 1 million Wisconsin adults voted, according to preliminary results analyzed by the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

Unofficial results collected by the Associated Press indicate there were at least 993,847 votes cast in the Democratic and Republican primaries for Governor, which is 22.1 percent of the state’s 2018 voting-age population of 4,498,402 residents. Those numbers do not include votes for the Libertarian, Wisconsin Green and Constitution Party candidates for Governor, which the AP did not collect because they were uncontested.

Tuesday’s turnout is the highest since 2002, when turnout was 22.5 percent. It was also very close to turnout for the April 4, 2018 Spring Primary, which was 22.3 percent.

Historically, turnout for Wisconsin’s Partisan Primary over the last decade has averaged 15.23 percent of the voting-age population, ranging from a high of 19.6 percent in 2010 to a low of 8.96 percent in 2008.

Official turnout numbers for past elections are available on the WEC’s website: <https://elections.wi.gov/elections-voting/statistics>.

Wisconsin does not have a statewide system for reporting unofficial election night results. Wisconsin’s 72 county clerks are required to post unofficial results on their websites within four hours of the polls closing. The WEC will publish official results after they have been certified.

The Elections Commission has until August 29 to certify results of the Partisan Primary so ballots can be printed for the November 6 General Election. Ballots for November must be available by September 20, which is 47 days before the election.

Elections Commission staff logged more than 500 calls from clerks and voters and as many emails on Tuesday. There were no noticeable trends in the questions we received and they can mostly be classified as standard Election Day assistance, such as helping voters to find a polling location. There were also no elections cyber incidents reported.

E-Poll Book Rollout Successful

In addition to administering the election Tuesday, WEC staff also rolled out Wisconsin’s new Badger Book electronic poll book system in eight locations around the state. This follows a successful pilot in five locations for the Spring Election. Poll workers used the system to check

in and register voters at 15 polling places in the cities of Rice Lake and Sun Prairie, the villages of Deforest, Jackson, McFarland and Salem Lakes, and the towns of Trenton and Waukesha.

The WEC staff does not expect additional Badger Book locations to be added for the November General Election, but more clerks have expressed interest in adoption in 2019. The Badger Book software is available for free to any municipal clerk in Wisconsin who wishes to use it. Municipalities will be responsible for purchasing the necessary dedicated point-of-service terminals.

Supplemental Poll Books Continue to Work Well

The WEC received no complaints again Tuesday about voters needing to reregister at the polls because their names had been inadvertently removed from the active voter list in early 2018.

The Commission approved the use of a supplemental poll book in response to problems at the February 20 Spring Primary, when some voters were required to reregister due to problems with a new process designed to identify voters who had moved. Use of supplemental poll books eliminated the problem at the Spring Election in April, when 1,333 people who affirmed they had not moved in 420 municipalities were able to vote without reregistering because of the supplemental poll books.

“If a registered voter’s name was not on the regular poll list, poll workers looked for them on the supplemental poll list,” said Wolfe. “If their name was there, they received a ballot after signing the supplemental poll list affirming that their address had not changed.”

Wolfe said WEC staff will continue reaching out to clerks around the state to learn more about their experience with the supplemental poll list so they can finalize a plan for November.

More information about supplemental poll books is available on the Commission’s website: <http://elections.wi.gov/node/5746>.

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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.