



STATE OF WISCONSIN

Legislative Audit Bureau

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Joe Chrisman
State Auditor

DATE: September 5, 2013

TO: Senator Robert Cowles and
Representative Samantha Kerkman, Co-chairpersons
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

FROM: Joe Chrisman
State Auditor 

SUBJECT: Proposed Audit of the Government Accountability Board—Background
Information

At your request, we have gathered some background information the Joint Legislative Audit Committee may find useful in considering an audit of the Government Accountability Board (GAB).

Created by 2007 Wisconsin Act 1, GAB is responsible for functions performed by the former State Elections Board and the former State Ethics Board. GAB administers Wisconsin's election, ethics, campaign finance, and lobbying laws and investigates alleged violations. In addition, GAB provides information to the public concerning statutorily required financial disclosures made by certain public officials and has responsibility for implementation of Wisconsin's Contract Sunshine Act, which requires all state agencies to report certain purchasing activities for posting to a publicly accessible website. In report 11-11, we assessed concerns about state agency compliance with the Contract Sunshine Act and the accuracy and timeliness of information posted to the website.

The board is composed of six members. Board members, who serve six-year terms, must have formerly been elected to and served as a judge of a court of record in Wisconsin. Board members are appointed by the Governor from a list created by a committee composed of four appellate court judges who are chosen at random by the Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

The board appoints a Director and General Counsel to perform legal and administrative functions and to serve as head of the agency. Statutes require that all employees of GAB shall be nonpartisan. GAB spent \$6.4 million in fiscal year 2012-13 and was authorized 53.75 full-time equivalent positions.

An audit of the Government Accountability Board could evaluate:

- its overall management and governance processes, including those used by the board and its staff to administer its statutorily required functions;
- its financial oversight, including fiscal controls and trends in expenditures by funding source and function;
- the training, education, and consultation it provides to external parties, including that related to elections procedures and the Statewide Voter Registration System; and
- its process for investigating and resolving complaints.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any additional questions regarding this request, please contact me.

JC/DS/bm

cc: Senator Mary Lazich
Senator Alberta Darling
Senator Kathleen Vinehout
Senator John Lehman

Representative Howard Marklein
Representative John Nygren
Representative Jon Richards
Representative Melissa Sargent

Kevin J. Kennedy, Director and General Counsel
Government Accountability Board