CHAPTER 7

ELECTION OFFICIALS; BOARDS; SELECTION AND DUTIES; CANVASSING

SUBCHAPTER I

SELECTION AND DUTIES

7.03 Compensation of election officials and trainees. (1) (a) Except as authorized under this paragraph, a reasonable daily compensation shall be paid to each inspector, voting machine custodian, automatic tabulating equipment technician, member of a board of canvassers, messenger, and tabulator who is employed and performing duties under chs. 5 to 12. Daily compensation shall also be provided to inspectors and inspector trainees for attendance at training programs conducted by the commission and municipal clerks under ss. 7.31 and 7.315. Alternatively, such election officials and trainees may be paid by the hour at a proportionate rate for each hour actually worked. Any election official or trainee may choose to volunteer his or her services by filing with the municipal clerk of the municipality in which he or she serves a written declination to accept compensation. The volunteer status of the election official or trainee remains effective until the official or trainee files a written revocation with the municipal clerk.

(b) Except as provided in par. (bm), any compensation owed shall be paid by the municipality in which the election is held, except that any compensation payable to a technician, messenger, tabulator, or member of the board of canvassers who is employed to perform services for the county shall be paid by the county and compensation payable to any messenger or tabulator who is employed to perform services for the state shall be paid by the state. If the commission employs an individual to perform duties which are the responsibility of a county or municipality, the commission shall charge the expense to the county or municipality.

(bm) Whenever a special election is called by a county or by a school district, a technical college district, a sewerage district, a sanitary district, or a public inland lake protection and rehabilitation district, the county or district shall pay the compensation of election officials performing duties in those municipalities, as determined under sub. (2).

(c) If a central counting location serving more than one municipality is utilized under s. 7.51 (1), the cost of compensation of election officials at the location shall be proportionately divided between the municipalities utilizing the location, except that if all municipalities within a county utilize the location, the compensation shall be paid by the county.

7.08 Elections commission. In addition to its duties for ballot arrangement under ch. 5 and date and notice requirements under ch. 10, the commission shall:

(1) ELECTION FORMS, VOTING APPARATUS. (a) Prescribe all official ballot forms necessary under chs. 5 to 10 and 12 and revise the official ballot forms to harmonize with legislation and the current official status of the political parties whenever necessary. The commission shall include on each ballot form, in the space for official endorsement, markings or spaces for identifying a ballot as an overvoted ballot, a duplicate overvoted ballot, a damaged ballot, or a duplicate damaged ballot, and for writing an identifying serial number. The commission shall provide one copy of each ballot form to each county and municipal clerk and board of election Commissioners. The commission shall distribute or arrange for distribution of additional copies. The prescribed forms shall be substantially followed in all elections under chs. 5 to 10 and 12.

(b) Prescribe the necessary standard sample forms and ballot containers to make the canvass, returns, statements and tally sheets complete for all elections the results of which are reportable to the commission under s. 7.60 (4) (a), and all other materials as it deems necessary to conduct the elections. The sample forms shall contain the necessary certificates of the inspectors and canvassers of election materials, and notes explaining their use and statutory basis.

(c) Prescribe forms required by ss. 6.24 (3) and (4), 6.30 (4) and (5), 6.33 (1), 6.47 (1) (am) 2. and (3), 6.55 (2), and 6.86 (2) to (3). All such forms shall contain a statement of the penalty applicable to false or fraudulent registration or voting through use of...
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7.08

(3) ELECTION MANUAL. Prepare and publish separate from the election laws an election manual written so as to be easily understood by the general public explaining the duties of the election officials, together with notes and references to the statutes as the commission considers advisable. The election manual shall:

(a) Be compiled by the commission.

(b) Emphasize the fact that election officials should help, not hinder, electors in exercising their voting rights.

(c) Be subject to periodic review and revision when necessary.

(4) ELECTION LAWS. Publish the election laws. The commission shall sell or distribute or arrange for the sale or distribution of copies of the election laws to county and municipal clerks and officials, together with notes and references to the statutes as the general public explaining the duties of the election officials, for filing nomination papers, but no later than the deadlines established in s. 10.06.

(d) As soon as possible after the closing date for filing nomination papers or after the canvass of the primary vote, no later than the deadlines established in s. 10.06, transmit to each county clerk a certified list of all candidates on file in its office for which electors in that county may vote. The list shall designate the order of arrangement and contain each candidate’s first name, middle initial or initials and last name, unless the candidate on his or her nomination papers or declaration of candidacy specifies that the middle initial be deleted, that a full middle name or former legal surname be substituted for the middle initial, that an initial be substituted for the candidate’s first name or that a nickname be substituted for a first or middle name or for a first initial or middle initial or initials, but no other abbreviations or titles are permitted. The list shall also include each candidate’s residence and post-office address; the office for which the person is a candidate; and, the party or principle the candidate represents, if any, in 5 words or less. Names of candidates nominated under s. 7.83 or 8.35 shall be certified by the commission upon filing of the necessary papers with it. At any time prior to an election, the commission may transmit an amended certification if a candidate dies or is determined not to qualify for ballot placement.

(5) DISTRICT MAPS. Distribute, upon request and free of charge, to any candidate for representative in Congress, state senator, or representative to the assembly a copy of the map or maps received under s. 16.96 (3) (b) showing district boundaries.

(6) ENFORCEMENT OF FEDERAL VOTING SYSTEM STANDARDS. Following each general election, audit the performance of each voting system used in this state to determine the error rate of the system in counting ballots that are validly cast by electors. If the error rate exceeds the rate permitted under standards of the federal election commission in effect on October 29, 2002, the commission shall take remedial action and order remedial action to be taken by affected counties and municipalities to ensure compliance with the standards. Each county and municipality shall comply with any order received under this subsection.

(8) ELECTORS VOTING WITHOUT PROOF OF RESIDENCE OR IDENTIFICATION OR PURSUANT TO COURT ORDER. Prescribe a written notice to be distributed to electors who vote under s. 6.96 or 6.97 that informs an elector how to obtain information regarding whether his or her vote has been counted, and if the vote will not be counted, the reason that the vote will not be counted.

(10) DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICE PROVIDERS. Provide to each municipal clerk, on a continuous basis, the names and addresses of organizations that are certified under s. 49.165 (4) (a) or 165.93 (4) (a) to provide services to victims of domestic abuse or sexual assault.

(11) COORDINATION WITH AND ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL OFFICIALS. Allocate and assign sufficient members of its staff to coordinate their activities with local election officials and maintain their availability to respond to inquiries from local election officials for each statewide election and each recount in progress.

(12) ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING PROOF OF IDENTIFICATION. Engage in outreach to identify and contract groups of electors who may need assistance in obtaining or renewing a document that constitutes proof of identification for voting and provide assistance to the electors in obtaining or renewing that document.

7.10 County clerks. (1) ELECTION SUPPLIES AND BALLOTS.

(a) Each county clerk shall provide ballots for every election in the county for all national, state and county offices, including metropolitan sewerage commission elections under s. 200.09 (11) (am), for municipal judges elected under s. 755.01 (4) and for state and county referenda. The official and sample ballots shall be prepared in substantially the same form as those prescribed by the commission under s. 7.08 (1) (a).

(b) The county clerk shall supply sufficient election supplies for national, state and county elections to municipalities within the county. The election supplies shall be enclosed in the sealed package containing the official ballots and delivered to the municipal clerk.

(c) With county board approval any county clerk may purchase or print the official forms of nomination papers for distribution to any person at cost or free.

(d) The county clerk may receive and store any unused ballots and disseminate election upon request of any municipal clerk of a municipality within the county, and may destroy such ballots pursuant to s. 7.23 (1) (am).

(2) PREPARING BALLOTS. The county clerk shall prepare copy for the official ballots immediately upon receipt of the certified list of candidates’ names from the commission. Names certified by the commission shall be arranged in the order certified. The county clerk shall place the names of all candidates filled in the clerk’s office or certified to the clerk by the commission on the proper ballot or ballots under the appropriate office and party titles. The county clerk shall prepare a special ballot under s. 5.60 (8) showing only the candidates in the presidential preference primary.

(3) TIME SCHEDULE. (a) The county clerk shall distribute the ballots to the municipal clerks no later than 48 days before each partisan primary and general election and no later than 22 days before each other primary and election, except that the clerk shall distribute the ballots under sub. (2) for the presidential preference primary no later than 48 days before the presidential preference primary. Election forms prepared by the commission shall be distributed at the same time. If the commission transmits an amended certification under s. 7.08 (2) (a) or if the commission or a court orders a ballot error to be corrected under s. 5.06 (6) or 5.72 (3)

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after ballots have been distributed, the county clerk shall distribute corrected ballots to the municipal clerks as soon as possible.

(b) The county clerk shall distribute an adequate supply of separately wrapped official ballots to each municipal clerk so the municipal clerk may supply ballots to absent elector applicants. The remaining ballots shall be sent in separately sealed packages clearly designating the ward for which each is intended and the approximate number of ballots of each kind enclosed.

(4) Resolving Notice Doubts. When in doubt as to compliance with the statutory requirements for election notices or the correct fees to be paid for them, the county clerk may consult the commission.

(6) Municipal Judge: Certified List. If candidates for the office of a municipal judge who is elected under s. 755.01 (4) file nomination papers in the office of the county clerk and any municipality served by the judge prepares its own ballots for voting machines or an electronic voting system, the county clerk shall certify to the municipal clerk of that municipality the names of the candidates for judge as soon as possible after the last day for filing nomination papers and after certification by the county board of canvassers of the results of any primary election.

(7) Voter Education. Each county clerk shall assist the commission in conducting educational programs under s. 5.05 (12) to inform electors about the voting process.

(8) Free Election Information Exchange. Each county clerk shall assist the commission and municipal clerks in maintaining toll-free telephone lines and other free access systems under s. 5.05 (13) for exchange of voting information.

(9) Training of Election Officials. Each county clerk shall assist the commission in the training of election officials under s. 5.05 (7).

(10) Information to Commission. Each county clerk shall provide to the commission any information requested under s. 5.05 (14).


7.11 Menominee county; town elections. The clerk shall prepare a ballot distinguishing between supervisors elected at large and by ward in any county having only one town with a part of the county board members elected by wards.

History: 1971 c. 304 s. 29 (2); 1973 c. 334.

7.15 Municipal clerks. (1) Supervise Registration and Elections. Each municipal clerk has charge and supervision of elections and registration in the municipality. The clerk shall perform the following duties and any others which may be necessary to properly conduct elections or registration:

(a) Equip polling places.

(b) Provide for the purchase and maintenance of election equipment.

(c) Prepare ballots for municipal elections, and distribute ballots and provide other supplies for conducting all elections. The municipal clerk shall deliver the ballots to the polling places before the polls open.

(cm) Prepare official absentee ballots for delivery to electors requesting them, and except as provided in this paragraph, send an official absentee ballot to each elector who has requested a ballot by mail, and to each military elector, as defined in s. 6.34 (1), and overseas elector who has requested a ballot by mail, electronic mail, or facsimile transmission, no later than the 47th day before each partisan primary and general election and no later than the 21st day before each other primary and election if the request is made before that day; otherwise, the municipal clerk shall send or transmit an official absentee ballot within one business day of the time the elector’s request for such a ballot is received. The clerk shall send or transmit an absentee ballot for the presidential preference primary to each elector who has requested that ballot no later than the 47th day before the presidential preference primary if the request is made before that day, or, if the request is not made before that day, within one business day of the time the request is received. For purposes of this paragraph, “business day” means any day from Monday to Friday, not including a legal holiday under s. 995.20.

(d) Prepare the necessary notices and publications in connection with the conduct of elections or registrations.

(e) Train election officials in their duties, calling them together whenever advisable, advise them of changes in laws, rules and procedures affecting the performance of their duties, and administer examinations as authorized under s. 7.30 (2) (c). The training shall conform with the requirements prescribed in rules promulgated by the commission under ss. 7.31 and 7.315. The clerk shall assure that officials who serve at polling places where an electronic voting system is used are familiar with the system and competent to instruct electors in its proper use. The clerk shall inspect systematically and thoroughly the conduct of elections in the municipality so that elections are honestly, efficiently and uniformly conducted.

(f) Discharge election officials for improper conduct or willful neglect of duties.

(g) In the manner prescribed by the commission, report suspected election frauds, irregularities, or violations of which the clerk has knowledge to the district attorney for the county where the suspected activity occurs and to the commission. The commission shall annually report the information obtained under this paragraph to the legislature under s. 13.172 (2).

(h) Review, examine and certify the sufficiency and validity of petitions and nomination papers.

(i) Direct how and when to destroy the contents of the blank ballot boxes and unused election materials.

(j) Send an absentee ballot automatically to each elector and send or transmit an absentee ballot to each military elector, as defined in s. 6.34 (1), and each overseas elector making an authorized request therefor in accordance with s. 6.22 (4), 6.24 (4), or 6.86 (2) or (2m).

(k) Reassign inspectors appointed to serve at one polling place to another polling place within the municipality whenever necessary to assure adequate staffing at all polling places. No such reassignment may have the effect of eliminating representation at a polling place by one of the political parties entitled to nominate inspectors under s. 7.30 (2) (a).

(1m) Attend Training. Each municipal clerk shall, at least once every 2 years during the period beginning on January 1 of each even-numbered year and ending on December 31 of the following year, attend a training program sponsored by the commission under ss. 7.31 and 7.315.

(2) Municipal Election Duties. (a) In municipal elections, the municipal clerks shall perform the duties prescribed for county clerks by s. 7.10.

(b) Cities over 500,000 population may prepare their own official and sample ballots. Official ballots not utilized as absentee ballots shall be printed so they are ready at least 2 days before the election.

(c) With the consent of the county clerk, municipalities may prepare their own ballots whenever voting machines or electronic voting systems are used in elections where candidates for both local offices and national, state or county offices appear on the ballot. This paragraph does not apply to cities under par. (b).

(d) Whenever the governing body of any municipality submits any question to a vote of the electors or whenever a proper recall petition and certificate are filed under s. 9.10, the municipal clerk shall issue a call for the election and prepare and distribute ballots as required in the authorization of submission or as provided in s. 9.10. The date of the referendum shall be fixed by the municipal clerk or board of election commissioners unless otherwise provided by law or unless the governing body fixes a date. The ballot...
for any referendum shall conform to s. 5.64 (2). If there is already an official municipal referendum ballot for the election, the question may appear on the same ballot.

(2m) Operation of Alternate absentee ballot site. In a municipality in which the governing body has elected to establish an alternate absentee ballot site under s. 6.855, the municipal clerk shall operate such site as though it were his or her office for absentee ballot purposes and shall ensure that such site is adequately staffed.

(3) Ballot supply. Sample ballots. (a) Where voting machines are used or where electronic voting systems are employed, the municipal clerk shall provide at least 2 duplicate sample ballots for each ward in diagram form showing the board or panel inside each voting machine or the front of each ballot as it will appear in the voting machines or booths on election day.

(b) Sample ballots and voting machine ballots shall be furnished to the officials in the ward or election district at least one day before each election.

(4) Recording electors. Except as authorized in s. 6.33 (5) (a), within 30 days after each election, the municipal clerk shall enter on the registration list under the name of each elector of the municipality who has voted at the election an indication of the date in which the elector voted.

(5) Record of ballots received. Each municipal clerk shall keep a record of when and in what condition the packages containing the ballots were received from the county clerk. The municipal clerk shall deliver to the proper officials the unopened packages of ballots the day before the election.

(6) Substitute ballots. (a) The municipal clerk shall provide substitute paper ballots in substantially the form of the original ballots whenever the necessary original ballots are not delivered to the municipality, are destroyed, are lost or stolen after delivery, are not ready for distribution or the supply is exhausted during polling hours. The municipal clerk may also provide substitute paper ballots, together with ballot boxes and voting booths, whenever a voting machine or electronic voting system is rendered inoperable by a malfunction which occurs within 24 hours of the time set for opening of the polls. Paper ballots may be cast only in accordance with the procedures prescribed in ss. 6.80 (2) and 7.37 (4).

(b) Upon receiving the substitute paper ballots accompanied by a statement made under oath by the municipal clerk that the ballots have been prepared and furnished by the clerk to replace the original ballots which are not available, or to substitute for a voting machine or electronic voting system which has been rendered inoperable by a malfunction which occurred within 72 hours of the time set for opening of the polls, the election officials shall use the substitute ballots in the same manner as if they had been original ballots.

(7) Request canvass assistance. The municipal clerk may request all election officials to assist the inspectors in canvassing the votes received at the respective polling places.

(8) Resolving notice doubts. When in doubt as to compliance with the statutory requirements for election notices or the correct fees to be paid for them, the municipal clerk may consult the commission.

(9) Voter education. Each municipal clerk shall assist the commission in conducting educational programs under s. 5.05 (12) to inform electors about the voting process.

(10) Free election information exchange. Each municipal clerk shall assist the commission in maintaining toll-free telephone lines and any other free access systems under s. 5.05 (13) for exchange of voting information.

(11) Training of election officials. Each municipal clerk shall train election officials under ss. 7.31 and 7.315.

(12) Free vote counting information. Each municipal clerk shall maintain a free access information system under which an elector who votes under s. 6.96 or 6.97 may ascertain current information concerning whether the elector’s vote has been counted, and if the vote will not be counted, the reason that it will not be counted.

(13) Information to commission. Each municipal clerk shall provide to the commission any information requested under s. 5.05 (14).

(14) Voting accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Each municipal clerk shall make reasonable efforts to comply with requests for voting accommodations made by individuals with disabilities whenever feasible.

(15) Provide notice of outstanding provisional ballots. As soon as possible after the closing hour for all polling places in the municipality on election night, the municipal clerk shall post at his or her office and on the Internet a site announced by the clerk before the polls open, and shall make available to any person upon request, a statement of the number of electors who have cast provisional ballots at the election in the municipality that cannot be counted as of that closing hour because the electors have not satisfied relevant voting requirements.

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him or her. An executive director of the city board of election commissioners shall be appointed under s. 62.51.

(3) The board of election commissioners is authorized to employ additional clerical assistants to carry out its necessary duties. The assistants’ salaries shall be fixed by the governing body of the municipality or county.

(4) The board of election commissioners may procure a seal to authenticate official papers and documents.

(5) The city council and county board shall provide office space in the city hall and county courthouse, respectively, pay all the necessary expenses, cooperate with the board of election commissioners, provide storage space for the election equipment and supplies and assist with the moving and conducting of the elections as necessary.

7.22 Municipal board of election commissioners. (1) The common council shall determine the salaries of the election commissioners and shall include sufficient funds in its budget to allow the municipal board of election commissioners to fulfill its duties.

(2) All expenses shall be paid upon order of the municipal board of election commissioners, signed by the chairperson and executive director and countersigned by the city comptroller. The orders, made payable to persons in whose favor issued, shall be the vouchers for the city treasurer for the payment of the orders.

(3) The municipal board of election commissioners shall prepare and furnish copies of all registrations, books, maps, instructions, and forms pertaining to the rules for registration and conducting elections for the use and guidance of the election officials.

(4) The municipal board of election commissioners shall compile and publish a biennial report, containing election statistics and records of all primaries and elections held within their city and county. Copies of the same shall be distributed to persons in such quantities as the municipal board of election commissioners deems proper.

(5) The chief of police shall station a police officer at polling places designated by the municipal board of election commissioners for each election.

7.23 Destruction of election materials. (1) All materials and supplies associated with an election, except as provided in sub. (2), may be destroyed according to the following schedule:

(a) Except as provided in par. (am), unused materials after an election and the contents of the blank ballot box after a primary may be destroyed at a time and in a manner designated by the appropriate clerk.

(am) Unused ballots may be discarded or destroyed no earlier than the day after the latest day for the filing of a petition for a recount under s. 9.01 for any office on the ballots.

(c) Registration forms of electors whose registrations are changed to ineligible status under s. 6.50 (7) may be destroyed 4 years after the change, unless an elector becomes eligible again during that period.

(d) Financial reports may be destroyed 6 years after the date of receipt. Financial registration statements may be destroyed 6 years after termination of registration.

(e) Poll lists created for any election may be destroyed 22 months after the election at which they were created.

(f) Except as authorized in par. (g), ballots, applications for absentee ballots, registration forms, or other records and papers requisite to voting at any federal election, other than registration cards, may be destroyed after 22 months.

(g) Detachable recording units and compartments for use with tabulating equipment for an electronic voting system may be cleared or erased 14 days after any primary and 21 days after any other election. Before clearing or erasing the units or compartments, a municipal clerk shall transfer the data contained in the units or compartments to a disk or other recording medium which may be erased or destroyed 22 months after the election to which the data relates. The requirement to transfer data does not apply to units or compartments for use with tabulating equipment for an electronic voting system that was approved for use prior to January 1, 2009, and that is not used in a federal election.

(h) Except as provided in par. (i), ballots may be destroyed 30 days after any election.

(i) Official canvasses may be destroyed 10 years after the election to which they relate.

(j) Election notices, and proofs of publication and correspondence filed in connection with such notices may be destroyed one year after the date of the election to which they relate.

(k) All other materials and supplies associated with an election may be destroyed 90 days after the election.

(2) If a recount is pending or if the time allowed for filing a recount petition at any election or an appeal or petition for review of any recount determination or decision at an election has not expired, no materials may be destroyed until after the recount is completed and the applicable time period has expired. In addition, if there is litigation pending with respect to a recount at an election, materials may be destroyed and recording units or compartments may be cleared or erased only by order of the court in which litigation is pending. Upon petition of the attorney general or a district attorney or U.S. attorney for the affected jurisdiction, a circuit judge for the affected jurisdiction may order that specified materials not be destroyed or that specified recorders, units or compartments not be cleared or erased as otherwise authorized under this subsection until the court so permits.

7.24 Title to election materials. The filing of a nomination paper, ballot application, financial report, affidavit, or other form or statement with the appropriate official or agency responsible for accepting such materials under chs. 5 to 12 irrevocably transfers the legal title to such official or agency, regardless of the sufficiency of the filing. The official or agency shall retain all election materials until destruction or other disposition is authorized under s. 7.23.

7.25 Voting machine officials’ duties. (1) The municipal clerk of each municipality in which voting machines are used is responsible for the proper ballot being placed on each machine, the sample ballots, setting, adjusting, and putting the machine in order to use in voting when delivered to the ward. For the purpose of labeling, setting, adjusting and putting the voting machines in order, one or more competent voting machine custodians may be employed.

(2) Under the direction of the municipal clerk, the custodian shall label or insert, set, adjust, put in order and deliver the machines with all necessary furniture and appliances to the rooms where the election will be held for each ward at least one hour before the time set for opening the polls on election day.

(3) In preparing a voting machine for an election according to the directions furnished, the custodian shall arrange the machine and ballot so both will meet all the requirements for voting and counting the election in the manner provided for in machine construction.

(4) When a voting machine is properly prepared for an election and delivered to the election ward, it shall be locked and sealed against any movement and the governing body or board of election commissioners shall provide proper protection to prevent tampering with the machines. The custodians preparing the machines shall deliver the keys for the machines to the municipal
clerk or executive director of the board of election commissioners together with a written report of each machine’s condition.

(5) Before an election each election official serving at a polling place where voting machines are used shall be instructed in their use and their duties in connection with them by the municipal clerk, who shall call as many meetings to give instructions to the election officials as are necessary. Officials and trainees may be compensated for attendance. Any person who does not understand the machines shall not be paid nor be allowed to serve.

(6) (a) Where voting machines are used, the election officials for each ward shall meet at their proper polling place at least 15 minutes before the time set for opening of the polls to arrange the voting machines and furniture to properly conduct the election.

(b) 1. Before opening the polls, the election officials shall do all of the following:

   a. Compare the ballots on the machines with the sample ballots furnished by the municipal clerk to ensure that the names, numbers, and letters on the sample ballots agree.

   b. Examine the seal on each machine to see that the seal has not been broken.

   c. Examine the counter on each machine to see that each counter registers 000.

   2. If any counter on any machine does not register 000, the counter number and the number showing on the counter shall be recorded, signed by all the election officials, and a copy shall be conspicuously posted by the inspectors at the polling place during polling hours.

   (c) After the inspection under par. (b), on the forms furnished, the election officials shall certify the condition of each voting machine and its counters. Each form shall be signed by each election official. After the election, one copy of each machine’s certification shall be delivered with each copy of the election returns.

History: 1971 c. 304 s.29(2); 1977 c. 427; 1979 c. 311; 1985 a. 304; 2001 a. 107; 2005 a. 149.

7.30 Appointment of election officials.  (1) Number. (a) Except as authorized under par. (b), there shall be 7 inspectors for each polling place at each election. Except as authorized in par. (b), in municipalities where voting machines are used, the municipal governing body may reduce the number of inspectors to 5. A municipal governing body may provide for the appointment of additional inspectors whenever more than one voting machine is used or wards are combined under s. 5.15 (6) (b). A municipal governing body may provide by ordinance for the selection of additional clerks or board of election commissioners to establish different working hours for different officials assigned to the same polling place. Alternate officials shall also be appointed in a number sufficient to maintain adequate staffing of polling places. Except for inspectors who are appointed under par. (b) and officials who are appointed without regard to party affiliation under sub. (4) (c), additional officials shall be appointed in such a manner that the total number of officials is an odd number and the predominant party under sub. (2) is represented by one more official than the other party.

(b) Each municipality may appoint one additional inspector to serve at each polling place without regard to party affiliation who shall serve as a greeter to answer questions and to direct electors to the proper locations for registration and voting and who shall be available to substitute for other election officials who must leave the room during the voting process.

(2) Qualifications and procedure. (a) Only election officials appointed under this section or s. 6.875 may conduct an election. Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph and in ss. 7.15 (1) (k) and 7.52 (1) (b), each election official shall be a qualified elector of a county in which the municipality where the official serves is located, and each chief inspector shall be a qualified elector of the municipality in which the chief inspector serves. If no qualified candidate for chief inspector is available or if the chief inspector is appointed to fill a vacancy under par. (b), the person so appointed need not be a qualified elector of the municipality. If a municipal clerk or deputy clerk is appointed to fill a vacancy under par. (b), the clerk or deputy clerk need not be a resident of the county, but shall be a resident of the state. No more than 2 individuals holding the office of clerk or deputy clerk may serve without regard to county residency in any municipality at any election.

All officials appointed under this section shall be able to read and write the English language, be capable, and be of good understanding, and may not be a candidate for any office to be voted for at an election at which they serve. An individual holding a local public office, as defined in s. 19.42 (7w), may be appointed to serve as an election official under this section without having to vacate the local public office. In 1st class cities, they may hold no public office other than notary public. Except as authorized under subs. (1) (b) and (4) (c), all inspectors shall be affiliated with one of the 2 recognized political parties which received the largest number of votes for presidential electors in the last national election, or in the ward or combination of wards served by the polling place at the last election. Excepting the inspector who may be appointed under sub. (1) (b), the party which received the largest number of votes is entitled to one more inspector than the party receiving the next largest number of votes at each polling place. Whenever 2 or more inspectors are required to perform a function within a polling place and both parties that are entitled to submit nominees have done so, the chief inspector shall assign, insofar as practicable, an equal number of inspectors from the nominees of each party.

(2m) Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph, a pupil who is 16 or 17 years of age and who is enrolled in grades 9 to 12 in a public or private school, in a home-based private educational program, as defined in s. 115.001 (3g), or in a tribal school, as defined in s. 115.001 (15m), may serve as an inspector at the polling place serving the pupil’s residence, with the approval of the pupil’s parent or guardian. Any pupil who has at least a 3.0 grade point average or the equivalent may serve. In addition, a school board, governing body of a private school, as defined in s. 115.001 (3d), tribal school, or administrator of a home-based private educational program may establish criteria for service by a pupil who does not have at least a 3.0 grade point average or the equivalent. A pupil may serve as an inspector at a polling place under this paragraph only if at least one election official at the polling place other than the chief inspector is a qualified elector of this state. No pupil may serve as chief inspector at a polling place under this paragraph. Before appointment by any municipality of a pupil as an inspector under this paragraph, the municipal clerk shall obtain written authorization from the pupil’s parent or guardian for the pupil to serve for the election for which he or she is appointed. In addition, if a pupil does not have at least a 3.0 grade point average or the equivalent, the municipal clerk shall obtain written certification from the principal of the school where the pupil is enrolled, or the administrator of the home-based private educational program in which the pupil is enrolled, that the pupil meets any criteria established by the school board, governing body, or administrator of the home-based private educational program for service as an inspector. Upon appointment of a pupil to serve as an inspector, the municipal clerk shall notify the principal of the school where the pupil is enrolled, the clerk or administrator of the home-based private educational program in which the pupil is enrolled, of the name of the pupil and the date of the election at which the pupil has been appointed to serve.

(b) When a vacancy occurs in an office under this section, the vacancy shall be filled by appointment of the municipal clerk. Unless the vacancy occurs in the position of an inspector appointed under sub. (1) (b), the vacancy shall be filled from the remaining names on the lists submitted under sub. (4) or from additional names submitted by the chairperson of the county party committee of the appropriate party under sub. (4) whenever
names are submitted under sub. (4) (d). If the vacancy is due to candidacy, sickness or any other temporary cause, the appointment shall be a temporary appointment and effective only for the election at which the temporary vacancy occurs. The same qualifications that applied to original appointees shall be required of persons who fill vacancies except that if a municipal clerk or deputy clerk fills the vacancy, the clerk or deputy, but not more than a total of 2 individuals in any municipality, may serve without regard to the clerk’s or deputy’s county of residence, if the clerk or deputy meets the other qualifications.

(3) Tabulators. (a) Not less than 30 days before any election the governing body or board of election commissioners of any municipality, by resolution, may authorize the municipal clerk or executive director of the board of election commissioners to select and employ tabulators for any election. Such authorization applies to the elections specified in the resolution, and if not specified, applies until the authorization is modified or revoked.

(b) The tabulators shall assist and be under the direction of the election inspectors after the close of the polls.

(4) Appointments. (a) Except in cities where there is a board of election commissioners, the mayor, president or board member of each municipality shall nominate to the governing body no later than their last regular meeting in December of each odd-numbered year the necessary election officials for each polling place and any election officials required under s. 7.52 (1) (b) no regular meeting is scheduled, the mayor, president or chairperson of the municipality shall immediately nominate another person for submitting a list of names from which all appointees to inspectors to be appointed in a city or village where there is a board of election commissioners, if there is an aldermanic district or village member of a committee under s. 8.17 for the ward or wards where a polling place is located, the committee member shall submit a list containing the names of nominees from the recognized political party, the board of under sub. (2), represented by the committee member. For inspectors to be appointed under s. 7.52 (1) (b), the committee members of the committees under s. 8.17 for the 2 recognized political parties described under sub. (2) for the municipality acting jointly shall submit a list containing the names of nominees from the party represented by the committee members of the committees for the municipality acting jointly.

Nominations for inspectors to be appointed in a city or village where there is no aldermanic district or village committee member shall proceed in a similar manner as the municipality located in a county having a population of 750,000 or less. The appropriate committee members, committee members, or chairperson of each committee shall sign the list to the mayor, president, or clerk of the municipality, or to his or her agent, the clerk shall immediately forward the list to the office of the municipality. If the chairperson submits the list to the municipal clerk or his or her agent, the clerk shall immediately forward the list to the mayor, president, or chairperson of the municipality. If committees are organized in subdivisions of a city, the chairperson of the city committee shall submit the list. Except as provided in par. (c), only those persons whose names are submitted by the chairperson of each committee under s. 8.17 may act as election officials. The chairperson of each of the committees under s. 8.17 may designate any individual whose name is submitted as a first choice nominee. The chairperson and secretary of the submitting committee shall sign the list.

(b) In a city or village located in a county having a population of more than 750,000, other than a city where there is a board of election commissioners, if there is an aldermanic district or village member of a committee under s. 8.17 for the ward or wards where a polling place is located, the committee member shall submit a list containing the names of nominees from the recognized political party, the board of under sub. (2), represented by the committee member. For inspectors to be appointed under s. 7.52 (1) (b), the committee members of the committees under s. 8.17 for the 2 recognized political parties described under sub. (2) for the municipality acting jointly shall submit a list containing the names of nominees from the party represented by the committee members of the committees for the municipality acting jointly. Nominations for inspectors to be appointed in a city or village where there is no aldermanic district or village committee member shall proceed in a similar manner as the municipality located in a county having a population of 750,000 or less. The appropriate committee member, committee members, or chairperson may designate any individual whose name is submitted as a first choice nominee. The aldermanic district or village committee member or the chairperson of the appropriate committee shall sign the list.

(c) Unless nonappointment is authorized under par. (e), upon submission of the lists of names as provided under subd. 2. a. or b., the governing body shall appoint each first choice nominee for so long as positions to be filled from that list are available. The governing body shall appoint other nominees in its discretion. If any nominee is not appointed, the mayor, president, or chairperson of the municipality shall immediately nominate another person from the appropriate lists submitted and continue until the necessary number of election officials from each party is achieved at that meeting.

(d) Except with respect to inspectors who are appointed under sub. (1) (b), for so long as nominees are made available by the political parties under this section, appointments may be made only from the lists of nominees submitted under this subsection. If the lists are not submitted by November 30 of the year in which appointments are to be made, the board of election commissioners shall appoint, or the mayor, president or chairperson of a municipality shall nominate, qualified electors of the appropriate political party, described under sub. (3) (d) (1) (b), if an insufficient number of qualified electors of the municipality can be identified, the board of election commissioners may appoint, and the mayor, president, or chairperson of the municipality may nominate, qualified electors of a county within which the municipality is located. If an insufficient number of
nominees appears on the lists as of November 30, the board of election commissioners shall similarly appoint, or the mayor, president or chairperson shall similarly nominate, sufficient individuals to fill the remaining vacancies. In addition, the mayor, president, or board chairperson of the municipality shall similarly nominate qualified persons to serve in the inspector positions authorized under sub. (1) (b). Any appointment under this paragraph which is made due to the lack of availability of names submitted under par. (b) may be made without regard to party affiliation.

(d) A party committee or aldermanic district or village committee or committeewoman under s. 8.17 may submit additional names for consideration under this subsection at any time for the purpose of filling vacancies that occur during a term of office. However, an appointment need not at no time be delayed because of the lack of availability of party nominees.

(e) If an appointing authority believes that, for good cause, it should not appoint an individual whose name is submitted as a first choice nominee under par. (b), it may request the commission to authorize nonappointment. The commission may permit nonappointment of an individual for cause demonstrated by an appointing authority.

(5) OATH OF OFFICE. Within 5 days after appointment of the election officials the municipal clerk shall give each appointee notice. The appointees shall file the official oath with the municipal clerk within 10 days after the mailing of the notice. Appointees to fill vacancies or any other election official who has not filed the oath, before receiving any ballots, shall sign the oath and return it to the municipal clerk. An inspector, after taking the oath, may administer any oath required to conduct an election.

(6) OFFICE TENURE. (a) Except as provided in par. (am), the appointed election officials shall hold office for 2 years and until their successors are appointed and qualified. They shall serve at every election held in their ward during their term of office.

(b) Prior to the first election following the appointment of the inspectors, the municipal clerk shall appoint one of the inspectors at each polling place, other than an inspector who is appointed under sub. (1) (b), to serve as chief inspector. No person may serve as chief inspector at any election who is not certified by the commission under s. 7.31 at the time of the election. The chief inspector shall hold the position for the remainder of the term unless the inspector is removed by the clerk or the inspector ceases to be certified under s. 7.31, except that whenever wards are combined or separated under s. 5.15 (6) (b), the municipal clerk shall appoint another inspector who is certified under s. 7.31 to serve as chief inspector at each polling place designated under s. 5.15 (6) (b). If a vacancy occurs in the position of chief inspector at any polling place, the municipal clerk shall appoint one of the other inspectors who is certified under s. 7.31 to fill the vacancy.

(c) If any election official appointed under this section lacks the qualifications set forth in this section, fails to attend training sessions required under s. 7.15 (1) (e) unless excused therefrom, is guilty of neglecting his or her official duties or commits official misconduct, the municipal clerk or board of election commissioners shall summarily remove the official from office and the vacancy shall be filled under sub. (2) (b).

7.315 Training of other election officials. (1) (a) The commission shall, by rule, prescribe the contents of the training that municipal clerks must provide to inspectors, other than chief inspectors, and to special voting deputies appointed under s. 6.875.

(b) 1. Each inspector other than a chief inspector and each special voting deputy appointed under s. 6.875 shall view or attend at least one training program every 2 years during the relevant period beginning on January 1 of each even-numbered year and ending on December 31 of the following year. Except as provided in subd. 2., no individual may serve as an inspector, other than a chief inspector, or as a special voting deputy under s. 6.875 at any election unless the individual has completed training for that election provided by the municipal clerk pursuant to rules promulgated under par. (a) within 2 years of the date of the election.

2. Only when an individual who has received training under subd. 1. is unavailable to perform his or her election duties due to sickness, injury, or other unforeseen occurrence may an individual who has not received training under subd. 1. be appointed to serve as an inspector, other than chief inspector, or a special voting deputy. The appointment of an individual to serve under this subdivision shall be for a specific election and no individual may be appointed under this subdivision more than one time in a 2-year period beginning on January 1 of each even-numbered year and ending on December 31 of the following year.

(2) The commission shall, by rule, prescribe requirements for, and the content of, training required of municipal clerks under s. 7.15 (1m). The commission may provide such training directly or arrange for such training to be provided by other organizations. The rules shall provide a method for notifying the relevant municipal governing body if a municipal clerk fails to attend required training.

(3) The commission may produce and periodically reissue as necessary a video program for the purpose of training election officials, including special voting deputies and election registration officials. The commission shall make any such program available for viewing electronically through an Internet-based system.

(4) Election registration officials shall receive the training as provided under this section for inspectors, other than chief inspectors.
7.32 Change of election official numbers. Notwithstanding s. 7.30 (1) (a), the governing body or board of election commissioners of any municipality may by resolution reduce the number of election officials and modify or rescind any similar previous action. No such action may reduce the number of officials at a polling place to less than 3.


Cross-ref: See also ch. EL 12, Wis. adm. code.

7.33 Service as an election official. (1) In this section:
(a) “Employee” has the meaning given under s. 101.01 (3).
(b) “Employer” has the meaning given under s. 101.01 (4).
(c) “State agency” has the meaning given under s. 20.001 (1) and includes an authority created under subch. II of ch. 114 or ch. 231, 232, 233, 234, or 237.

(2) Service as an election official under this chapter shall be mandatory upon all individuals appointed, during the full 2-year term, after which they shall be exempt from further service as an election official, under this chapter, until 3 terms of 2 years each have elapsed. Municipal clerks may grant exemptions from service at any time.

(3) Every employer shall grant to each employee who is appointed to serve as an election official under s. 7.30 a leave of absence for the entire 24-hour period of each election day in which the official serves in his or her official capacity. An employee who serves as an election official shall provide his or her employer with at least 7 days’ notice of application for a leave. The municipal clerk shall verify appointments upon request of any employer.

(4) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, each local governmental unit, as defined in s. 16.97 (7), may, and each state agency shall, upon proper application under sub. (3), permit each of its employees to serve as an election official under s. 7.30 without loss of fringe benefits or seniority privileges earned for scheduled working hours during the period specified in sub. (3), without loss of pay for scheduled working hours during the period specified in sub. (3) except as provided in sub. (5), and without any other penalty. For employees who are included in a collective bargaining unit for which a representative is recognized or certified under subch. V of ch. 111, this subsection shall apply unless otherwise provided in a collective bargaining agreement.

(5) Any employee of a local governmental unit, as defined in s. 16.97 (7), or state agency who obtains a paid leave of absence under sub. (4) in order to serve as an election official under s. 7.30 shall certify in writing to the head of the local governmental unit or state agency by which he or she is employed the amount of compensation that the employee receives for such service. Upon receipt of the certification, the head of the local governmental unit or state agency shall deduct that amount from the employee’s pay earned for scheduled working hours during the period specified in sub. (2) when the employee is on a paid leave of absence.

(6) Each employer other than a state agency shall, upon proper application under sub. (3), permit each of its employees to serve as an election official under s. 7.30 without loss of fringe benefits or seniority privileges earned for scheduled working hours during the period specified in sub. (3), and shall not impose any other penalty upon an employee who serves as an election official, except the employer need not pay wages to an employee for time not worked while the employee is serving as an election official.


7.36 Chief inspector’s duties. Subject to the supervision of the municipal clerk or executive director of the board of election commissioners, the chief inspector shall direct the conduct of activities assigned to the inspectors at the polling place. The chief inspector shall refer any question as to the proper procedure to be employed in carrying out the inspectors’ duties to the municipal clerk or executive director.

History: 1985 a. 304.

7.37 Inspectors’ duties. (1) ADJOURN TO ANOTHER LOCATION. Whenever it becomes impossible or inconvenient to hold an election at the designated location, the inspectors, after assembling at or as near as practicable the designated polling place and before receiving any votes, may adjourn to the nearest convenient place for holding the election. The inspectors shall make a proclamation of the move and a law enforcement officer or other proper person designated by the municipal clerk shall be stationed at or as near as possible to the place where the adjournment was made, to notify all electors of the place to which the election adjourned. At the new location the inspectors shall immediately proceed with the election.

(2) PRESERVE ORDER. The inspectors shall possess full authority to maintain order and to enforce obedience to their lawful commands during the election and the canvass of the votes. They shall permit only one person in a voting booth at a time and shall prevent any person from taking notice of how another person has voted, except when assistance is given under s. 6.82. They shall enforce s. 5.35 (5) and prevent electioneering and distribution of election-related material from taking place in violation of ss. 12.03 and 12.035. If any person refuses to obey the lawful commands of an inspector, or is disorderly in the presence or hearing of the inspectors, or otherwise disturbs the proceedings, they may order any law enforcement officer to remove the person from the voting area or to take the person into custody.

(3) CHECK BALLOT BOXES. Immediately before the proclamation that the polls are open the election inspectors shall open each ballot box in the presence of the people assembled there, turn the boxes upside down so as to empty them of everything that may be inside and then lock them. The ballot boxes shall remain locked and shall not be reopened until the polls close for the purpose of counting the ballots therein.

(4) BALLOTING PROCEDURE. At polling places which utilize paper ballots or electronic voting systems in which ballots are distributed to electors, 2 inspectors shall be assigned to take charge of the official ballots. They shall write their initials on the back of each ballot and deliver to each elector as he or she enters the voting booth one ballot properly endorsed by each of them. Where paper ballots are used, the inspectors shall fold each ballot in the proper manner to be deposited before delivering it to the elector. If asked, inspectors may instruct any elector as to the proper manner of marking the ballot, but they may not give advice, suggestions, express any preferences or make any requests as to the person for whom the elector intends to vote.

(5) IMPROP...
(10) CHALLENGED ELECTORS. If any person is challenged for cause, the inspectors shall proceed under ss. 6.92 and 6.925 and with the aid of other provisions of ch. 6 as appear applicable, shall resolve the challenge.

(11) SPOILED BALLOTS. Any spoiled ballot returned to an inspector under s. 6.80 (2) (c) shall be immediately destroyed by one of the inspectors.

(12) CANVASSERS. The election inspectors shall constitute the board of canvassers of their polling place and in that capacity shall perform the duties under s. 7.51, except as otherwise designated by the municipal clerk under ss. 5.85 and 5.86.

(13) CLOSING OF POLLS. For each polling place, the municipal clerk shall designate an official of the municipality who shall position himself or herself at the end of the line of individuals waiting to vote, if any, at the time that the polls officially close. The official may be an appointed inspector who serves as that polling place, an employee of the municipal clerk or a police officer. Only individuals in line ahead of the official shall be permitted to vote under s. 6.78 (4).


The requirement under sub. (4) that each ballot be initialed by 2 inspectors is directory, not mandatory, when the number of votes is equal to the number of electors. Roth v. LaFarge School District Board of Canvassers, 2001 WI App 221, 247 Wis. 2d 708, 634 N.W.2d 882, 01−0160.

7.38 Vacancies after nomination. (1) Except as provided in sub. (4), after the death of a candidate nominated for a partisan office, either in a primary or when no primary is required under s. 8.50 (3) (b), the vacancy may be filled by the candidate’s political party. In the case of county offices, the vacancy shall be filled by the chairperson of the county committee. If no county committee exists, the vacancy shall be filled by the chairperson of the state committee. For other offices, the vacancy shall be filled by the chairperson of the state committee. The appropriate chairperson shall file with the official or agency with whom nomination papers are filed for the office a certificate signed, certified and sworn to in the same as an original nomination paper. The certificate shall state the cause of the vacancy, the name of the new nominee and the office for which the nomination is made. A political party may not nominate a candidate for an office for which no person representing that party has filed nomination papers and a declaration of candidacy.

(2) The certificate shall be filed within 4 days of the date of notification of the vacancy and shall have the same effect as original nomination papers.

(3) If the vacancy occurs after ballots have been printed in any county or municipality, the chairperson of the committee filling the vacancy shall supply the municipal clerk with stickers containing the name of the new nominee only. The stickers may be no larger than the space provided on the ballot for the original candidate’s name and office.

(4) There can be no vacancy in nomination prior to a primary election when no primary is required under s. 8.50 (3) (b).

(5) In the event of failure to file the notice of a current state chairperson, as required under s. 8.17 (12), the commission may not recognize the state committee for the purpose of filling vacancies under sub. (1).


7.40 Sample ballots. Any committee may, at its own expense and subject to limitations upon contributions and disbursements under ch. 11, print a supply of sample ballots, provided each sample ballot includes on its face the information required by s. 11.1303 (2) and all the names shown on the official ballot. In this section, committee has the meaning given in s. 11.0101 (6).

History: 1987 a. 391 s. 46m; 2015 a. 117.

7.41 Public’s right to access. (1) Any member of the public may be present at any polling place, in the office of any municipal clerk whose office is located in a public building on any day that absentee ballots may be cast in that office, or at an alternate site under s. 6.855 on any day that absentee ballots may be cast at that site for the purpose of observation of an election and the absentee ballot voting process, except a candidate whose name appears on the ballot at the polling place or on an absentee ballot to be cast at the clerk’s office or alternate site at that election. The chief inspector or municipal clerk may reasonably limit the number of persons representing the same organization who are permitted to observe under this subsection at the same time. Each person permitted to observe under this subsection shall print his or her name in and sign and date a log maintained by the chief inspector or municipal clerk for that polling place, office, or alternate site.

(2) The chief inspector or municipal clerk may restrict the location of any individual exercising the right under sub. (1) to certain areas within a polling place, the clerk’s office, or alternate site under s. 6.855. The chief inspector or municipal clerk shall clearly designate observation areas for election observers under sub. (1). The observation areas shall be not less than 3 feet from nor more than 8 feet from the table at which electors announce their name and address to be issued a voter number at the polling place, office, or alternate site and not less than 3 feet from nor more than 8 feet from the table at which a person may register to vote at the polling place, office, or alternate site. The observation areas shall be so positioned to permit any election observer to readily observe all public aspects of the voting process.

(3) The chief inspector or municipal clerk may order the removal of any individual exercising the right under sub. (1) if that individual commits an overt act which does any of the following:

(a) Disrupts the operation of the polling place, clerk’s office, or alternate site under s. 6.855.

(b) Violates s. 12.03 (2) or 12.035.

(4) No individual exercising the right under sub. (1) may view the confidential portion of a registration list maintained under s. 6.36 (4) or a poll list maintained under s. 6.79 (6). However, the inspectors or municipal clerk shall disclose to such an individual, upon request, the existence of such a list, the number of electors whose names appear on the list, and the number of those electors who have voted at any point in the proceedings. No such individual may view the certificate of an absent elector who obtains a confidential listing under s. 6.47 (2).

(5) The commission shall promulgate rules that are consistent with the requirements of sub. (2) regarding the proper conduct of individuals exercising the right under sub. (1), including the interaction of those individuals with inspectors and other election officials.


SUBCHAPTER II

CANVASS OF RETURNS AND CERTIFICATION

7.50 Elector intent. (1) REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS. (a) Except as provided in s. 7.15 (6), only ballots provided by the person authorized to have them printed shall be cast and counted in any election.

(b) When an elector casts more votes for any office or measure than he or she is entitled to cast at an election, all the elector’s votes for that office or measure are invalid and the elector is deemed to have voted for none of them, except as provided in par. (c) and sub. (2) (d). If an elector casts less votes for any office or measure than he or she is entitled to cast at an election, all votes cast by the elector shall be counted but no vote shall be counted more than once.
ELECTION OFFICIALS; DUTIES; CANVASSING 7.51

Local board of canvassers. (1) 

7.51 Local board of canvassers. (1) 

(1) Cannass procedures. Immediately after the polls close the inspectors except any inspector appointed under s. 7.30 (1) (b) shall proceed to canvass publicly all votes received at the polling place. In any municipality where an electronic voting system is used, the municipal governing body or board of election commissioners may provide or authorize the municipal clerk or executive director of the board of election commissioners to provide for the adjournment of the canvass to one or more central counting locations for specified polling places in the manner prescribed in subch. III of ch. 5. No central counting location may be used to count votes at a polling place where an electronic voting system is not employed. The canvass, whether conducted at the polling place or at a central counting location, shall continue without adjournment until the canvass of all absentee ballots cast and received on or before election day is completed and the return statement is made or, in municipalities where absentee ballots are canvassed under s. 7.52, until the canvass of all absentee ballots cast and received on or before election day is completed and the return statement for those ballots is made. The inspectors shall not permit access to the name of any elector who has obtained a confidential listing under s. 6.47 (2) during the canvass, except as authorized in s. 6.47 (8).

(2) Tallying. (a) The inspectors shall first compare the poll lists, correcting any mistakes until the poll lists agree. The chief inspector and the inspectors who are responsible for recording votes under s. 6.79 shall verify the correctness of the poll lists after the polls close by each signing their name thereto. Where
ballots are distributed to electors, the inspectors shall then open
the ballot box and remove and count the number of ballots therein
without examination except as is necessary to ascertain that each
is a single ballot. If 2 or more ballots are folded together so as to
appear as a single ballot, the inspectors shall lay them aside until
the count is completed; and if, after a comparison of the count and
the appearance of the ballots it appears to a majority of the inspectors
that the ballots folded together were voted by the same person
they may not be counted but the inspectors shall mark them as to
the reason for removal, set them aside and carefully preserve them.

(a) When the number of ballots cast at an election is less than 1,000,
the inspectors shall immediately place the ballots in a pile and
certificates furnished. In recording the votes registered on any counter
which, before the opening of the polls, did not register 000, the
inspectors shall upon the return sheets subtract the number regis-
tered before the polls opened from the number registered when the
polls closed. The difference between the 2 numbers is the correct
vote for the candidate whose name was represented by the
counter, except if the number registered on the counter when the
polls closed is smaller than the number registered thereon when
the polls opened, the number 1,000 shall be added to the number
registered when the polls closed, before the subtraction is made.

(b) When during the counting of the ballots cast at an election
a majority of the inspectors find that a ballot is so defective that
they cannot determine with reasonable certainty for whom it was
cast, they shall so mark the ballot and preserve it. The inspectors
shall not count the vote cast on the ballot for any office for which
they determine the ballot to be defective.

(c) Whenever the number of ballots exceeds the number of vot-
ing electors as indicated on the poll list, the inspectors shall place
all ballots face up to check for blank ballots. In this paragraph,
"blank ballot" means a ballot on which no votes are cast for any
office. The inspectors shall not mark, lay aside and preserve any
blanks. Except in municipalities where absentee ballots are canvassed under s. 7.52, if the number of ballots still exceeds the number of voting electors, the inspectors shall place all ballots face down and proceed to check for the initials. The inspectors shall mark, lay aside and preserve any ballot not bearing
the initials of 2 inspectors or any absentee ballot not bearing
the initials of the municipal clerk. During the count the inspectors
shall count those ballots cast by challenged electors the same as
the other ballots.

(d) The inspectors shall keep a written statement, in duplicate,
of the number of ballots set aside and the number of defective bal-
lots and challenged ballots. The statement shall contain a record
of the reasons for setting aside each ballot and the reasons why
each defective or challenged ballot is defective or challenged. The
inspectors shall certify that the statement is correct, sign it, and
attach it to the tally sheets.

(e) Except in municipalities where absentee ballots are can-
vassed under s. 7.52, if after any ballots have been laid aside, the
number of ballots still exceeds the total number of electors recorded on the poll list, the inspectors shall separate the absentee ballots from the other ballots. If there is an excess number of absentee ballots, the inspectors shall place the absentee ballots in the ballot box and one of the inspectors shall publicly and without examination draw therefrom by chance the number of ballots equal to the excess number of absentee ballots. If there is an excess number of nonabsentee ballots, the inspectors shall place those ballots in the ballot box and one of the inspectors shall publicly and without examination draw therefrom by chance the number of ballots equal to the excess number of those ballots. All bal-
lots so removed may not be counted but shall be specially marked
as having been removed by the inspectors on original canvass due
to an excess number of ballots, set aside and preserved. When the
number of ballots and total shown on the poll list agree, the inspectors
shall return all ballots to be counted to the ballot box and shall
turn the ballot box in such manner as to thoroughly mix the ballots.
The inspectors shall then open, count and record the number of votes
cast on the ballots. When all ballots are counted, the inspectors shall separate them into piles for ballots similarly voted. Objections may be
made to placement of ballots in the piles at the time the separation
is made.

(f) If corrected ballots are distributed under s. 5.72 (3) or 7.10
(3), only the votes cast on the corrected ballots may be counted for
any office or referendum in which the original ballots differ from
the corrected ballots.

(g) Immediately after the polls close, where voting machines
are used, the inspectors shall open the registering or recording compartiments or remove the record of the votes cast and shall can-
vass, record, announce and return on the tally sheets and certifi-
ELECTION OFFICIALS; DUTIES; CANVASSING

7.52

(6) ELECTRONIC VOTING SYSTEMS. The procedure for canvassing of votes cast at polling places utilizing an electronic voting system in which ballots are distributed to electors shall follow the procedure for canvassing paper ballots insofar as applicable, and the procedure for canvassing of votes cast at polling places utilizing an electronic voting machine shall follow the procedures for canvassing of mechanical voting machines insofar as applicable, except as otherwise provided in ss. 5.85 to 5.89.


Canvassing boards are governmental bodies subject to the open meetings law — including the public notice, open session, and reasonable public access requirements — when they convene for the purpose of carrying out their statutory canvassing activities, but not when they are gathered only as individual inspectors fulfilling administrative duties. The gathering of election inspectors in a polling place constitutes a meeting of the local canvassing board only after the polls close and the canvassing under this section begins. OAG 5−14.

While canvassing boards must provide the public a reasonable opportunity to meaningfully observe their meetings, they may impose reasonable limits on public access to the extent necessary to protect the effective and orderly conduct of the canvass. The same principles of reasonableness govern the public’s opportunity to inspect election documents and materials at canvassing board meetings. OAG 5−14.

7.52 Canvassing of absentee ballots. (1) The governing body of any municipality may provide by ordinance that, in lieu of canvassing absentee ballots at polling places under s. 6.88, the municipal board of absentee ballot canvassers designated under s. 7.53 (2m) shall, at each election held in the municipality, canvass all absentee ballots received by the municipal clerk by 8 p.m. on election day. Prior to enacting an ordinance under this subsection, the municipal clerk or board of election commissioners of the municipality shall notify the elections commission concerning administration of this section. At every election held in the municipality following enactment of an ordinance under this subsection, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall, any time after the opening of the polls and before 10 p.m. on election day, publicly convene to count the absentee ballots for the municipality. The municipal clerk shall give at least 48 hours’ notice of any meeting under this subsection. Any member of the public has the same right of access to a meeting of the municipal board of absentee ballot canvassers under this subsection that the individual would have under s. 7.41 to observe the proceedings at a polling place. The board of absentee ballot canvassers may order the removal of any individual exercising the right to observe the proceedings if the individual disrupts the meeting.

(b) A municipality that adopts the canvassing procedure under this section may appoint additional inspectors under s. 7.30 (2) (a) to assist the absentee ballot board of canvassers in canvassing absentee ballots under this section. In such case, an odd number of inspectors shall be appointed, and at no time may there be less than three inspectors who serve. Except as authorized in s. 7.30 (4) (e), all inspectors shall be affiliated with one of the 2 recognized political parties receiving the largest numbers of votes for president, or for governor in nonpresidential general election years, in the municipality. The party whose candidate received the largest number of votes in the municipality is entitled to select the inspector over the party whose candidate received the next largest number of votes in the municipality. Each inspector so appointed shall be a qualified elector of the municipality. The inspectors who are appointed under this paragraph shall serve under the direction and supervision of the board of absentee ballot canvassers.

(c) In each municipality where absentee ballots are canvassed under this section, no later than the closing hour of the polls, the municipal clerk shall post at his or her office and on the Internet at a site announced by the clerk before the polls open, and shall make available to any person upon request, a statement of the number of absentee ballots that the clerk has mailed or transmitted to electors and that have been returned by the closing hour on elec...
absentee ballot canvassers shall not count the ballot. Each member of the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall endorse every counted but the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall mark is a single ballot. If 2 or more ballots are folded together so as to appears to the board of absentee ballot canvassers that the ballots comparison of the count and the appearance of the ballots it

(b) When during the counting of the ballots cast at an election the board of absentee ballot canvassers finds that a ballot is so defective that it cannot determine with reasonable certainty for whom it was cast, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall mark the ballot and preserve it. The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall not count the vote cast on the ballot for any office for which it determines the ballot to be defective.

(c) Whenever the number of ballots exceeds the number of voting electors as indicated on the poll list, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall place all ballots face up to check for blank bal-lots. In this paragraph, “blank ballot” means a ballot on which no votes are cast for any office or question. The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall mark, lay aside and preserve any blank ballots. If the number of ballots still exceeds the number of voting electors, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall place all bal-lots face down and proceed to check for the initials. The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall mark, lay aside, and preserve any ballot not bearing the initials of the municipal clerk. During the count, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall count those ballots cast by challenged electors the same as the other ballots.

(d) The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall keep a written statement, in duplicate, of the number of ballots set aside and the number of defective ballots and challenged ballots. The statement shall contain a record of the reasons for setting aside each ballot and the reasons why each defective or challenged ballot is defective or challenged. The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall certify that the statement is correct, sign it, and attach it to the tally sheets.

(e) If, after any ballots have been set aside, the number of bal-lots still exceeds the total number of electors recorded on the poll list, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall place the absentee ballots in the ballot box and one of the members shall publicly and without examination draw therefrom by chance the number of ballots equal to the excess number of ballots. All ballots so removed shall not be counted but shall be specially marked as hav-ing been removed by the board of absentee ballot canvassers on original canvass due to an excess number of ballots, set aside, and preserved. When the number of ballots and total shown on the poll list agree, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall return all ballots to be counted to the ballot box and shall turn the ballot box in such manner as to thoroughly mix the ballots. The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall then open, count, and record the number of votes. When the ballots are counted, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall separate them into piles for bal-lots similarly voted. Objections may be made to placement of bal-lots in the piles at the time the separation is made.

(f) If corrected ballots under s. 5.06 (4) or 5.72 (3) are distrib-uted under s. 7.10 (3), only the votes cast on the corrected ballots may be counted for any office or referendum in which the original ballots differ from the corrected ballots.

(g) The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall place together all ballots counted by it that relate to any national, state, or county office or any state, county, or technical college district referendum and secure them together so they cannot be removed or tampered with without breaking the seals or locks, or destroying the container. The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall place the ballots cast under s. 6.97 in a separate, securely sealed carrier envelope which is clearly marked “Section 6.97 ballots.” Each member of the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall sign the carrier envelope. The carrier envelope shall not be placed in the ballot container. The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall then deliver the bal-
(h) For ballots that relate only to municipal or school district offices or referenda, the board of absentee ballot canvassers, in lieu of par. (a), after counting the ballots shall return them to the proper ballot boxes, lock the boxes, paste paper over the slots, sign their names to the paper, and deliver them and the keys therefor to the municipal or school district clerk. The clerk shall retain the ballots until destruction is authorized under s. 7.23.

(i) All absentee certificate envelopes that have been opened shall be returned by the board of absentee ballot canvassers to the municipal clerk in a securely sealed carrier envelope that is clearly marked “absentee certificate envelopes” and are authorized in absentee certificate envelopes. The envelope shall be signed by each member of the board of absentee ballot canvassers. Except when the ballots are used in a municipal or school district election only, the municipal clerk shall transmit the used envelopes to the county clerk.

(5) (a) The vote of any absent elector may be challenged by any elector for cause and the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall have all the power and authority given the inspectors to hear and determine the legality of the ballot the same as if the ballot had been voted in person.

(b) For the purpose of deciding upon ballots that are challenged for cause, the board of absentee ballot canvassers may call before it any person whose absentee ballot is challenged if the person is available to be called. If the person challenged refuses to answer fully any relevant questions put to him or her by the board of absentee ballot canvassers under s. 6.92, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall reject the person’s vote. If the challenge is not withdrawn after the person offering to vote has answered the questions, one of the members of the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall administer to the person the following oath or affirmation: “You do solemnly swear (or affirm) that you are 18 years of age; you are a citizen of the United States; you are now and for 28 consecutive days have been a resident of this ward except under s. 6.02 (2), stats.; you have not voted at this election; you have not made any bet or wager or become directly or indirectly interested in any bet or wager depending upon the result of this election; you are not on any other ground disqualified to vote at this election.” If the person challenged refuses to take the oath or affirmation, the person’s vote shall be rejected. If the person challenged answers fully all relevant questions put to him or her by the board of absentee ballot canvassers under s. 6.92, takes the oath or affirmation, and fulfills the applicable registration requirements, and if the answers to the questions given by the person indicate that the person meets the voting qualification requirements, the person’s vote shall be received.

(6) The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall review each certificate envelope to determine whether any absentee ballot is cast by an elector whose name appears on the poll list as ineligible to vote at the election, including ineligibility to vote by reason of a felony conviction. If the board of absentee ballot canvassers receives an absentee ballot that has been cast by an elector whose name appears on the poll list as ineligible to vote, the inspectors shall challenge the ballot in the same manner as provided for inspectors making challenges under s. 6.92 and shall treat the ballot in the manner as provided for treatment of challenged ballots by inspectors under s. 6.95.

(7) The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall maintain tally sheets on forms provided by the municipal clerk, which shall state the number of votes cast for each office and for each individual receiving votes for that office, whether or not the individual’s name appears on the ballot, and shall state the vote for and against each proposition voted on. Upon completion of the canvass of the absentee ballots, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall immediately complete statements in duplicate. The statements shall state the excess, if any, by which the number of ballots exceeds the number of electors voting as shown by the poll list used by the board of absentee ballot canvassers under this section and shall state the poll list number of the last elector as shown by the poll list. Each member of the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall then certify to the correctness of the statements and tally sheets and sign their names. All other election officials assisting with the tally shall also certify to the correctness of the tally sheets. When the tally is complete, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall publicly announce the results from the statements, and the records of the count are open to public inspection and copying under s. 19.35 (1).

(8) The board of absentee ballot canvassers shall make full and accurate return of the votes cast for each candidate and proposition on the tally sheet forms. Each tally sheet shall record the returns for each office or referendum by ward, unless combined and ascertainment of the results by the inspectors or, in municipalities where absentee ballots are canvassed under s. 7.52, the inspectors may complete and sign the canvass statement and determination of election night. In municipalities where absentee ballots are canvassed under s. 7.52, after the canvass of the absentee ballots is completed under s. 7.52, the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall reconcile the poll list of the electors who vote by absentee ballot with the corresponding poll list of the electors who vote in person to ensure that no elector is allowed to cast more than one ballot. If an elector who votes in person has submitted an absentee ballot, the absentee ballot is void. Except as authorized in par. (b), if one or more electors of the municipality have cast provisional ballots that are eligible to be counted under s. 6.97, the inspectors, acting as the board of canvassers, shall reconvene no later than 9 a.m. on the Monday after the election to count the valid provisional ballots and shall adjust the returns accordingly. The inspectors, acting as the board of canvassers, need not reconvene if the municipal clerk certifies that he or she has received no provisional ballots from the time that the board of canvassers completed the initial canvass and 4 p.m. on the Friday after the election. Upon completion of the canvass under this paragraph and any canvass that is conducted under s. 7.52 and ascertainment of the results by the inspectors or, in municipalities where absentee ballots are canvassed under s. 7.52, by the inspectors and the board of absentee ballot canvassers, the municipal clerk shall publicly read to the inspectors or the board of absentee ballot canvassers the names of the persons voted for and the number of votes for each person for each municipal office, the names of the persons declared by the inspectors or board of absentee ballot canvassers to have won nomination or election to each municipal office, and the number of votes cast for and against each municipal referendum question.
(b) Solely for purposes of the reconvening of a board of canvassers under par. (a) for a specific election, the municipal clerk may determine to replace the members of the board of canvassers with a 3-member board of canvassers consisting of the clerk, the chief inspector, and one other inspector who shall be appointed by the clerk. If the municipal clerk is a candidate at the election being canvassed or is unable to serve, the other 2 members shall appoint a qualified elector of the municipality to serve in place of the clerk. If one of the other members is unable to serve, the municipal clerk shall appoint a qualified elector of the municipality to serve in place of that member. The person or persons making any appointment under this paragraph shall do so by letter which shall be signed by the person or persons, dated, and filed in the office of the municipal clerk. Upon the appointment and qualification of all members, the reconstituted board of canvassers shall then reconvene and carry out its responsibilities under par. (a).

(2) MUNICIPALITIES WITH 2 OR MORE WARDS. (a) 1. Except as provided in par. (c), the municipal board of canvassers for municipal elections in each municipality utilizing more than one polling place shall be composed of the municipal clerk and 2 other qualified electors of the municipality appointed by the clerk. The members of the board of canvassers shall serve for 2-year terms commencing on January 1 of each even-numbered year, except that any member who is appointed to fill a permanent vacancy shall serve for the unexpired term of the original appointee.

2. If the municipal clerk’s office is vacant or if the clerk cannot perform his or her duties, the mayor, president or board chairperson of the municipality shall designate another qualified elector of the municipality to serve in lieu of the clerk for that election.

3. If the clerk is a candidate at an election being canvassed, the clerk may perform his or her duties and has an opponent on the board of canvassers only if the clerk does not have an opponent whose name appears on the ballot or in the case of a recount, if the office the clerk is seeking is not a subject of the recount. If the clerk is a candidate at the election being canvassed and has an opponent whose name appears on the ballot or if the office the clerk is seeking is a subject of a recount, the mayor, president or board chairperson of the municipality shall designate another qualified elector of the municipality to serve in lieu of the clerk for that election.

4. If any other member of the board of canvassers is a candidate at the election being canvassed, the clerk shall appoint another qualified elector of the municipality to temporarily fill the vacancy.

(c) In cities of more than 500,000 population, the board of election commissioners shall act as the board of canvassers.

(cm) If one or more temporary vacancies on the municipal board of canvassers reduces the number of members to less than 3, the municipal clerk shall appoint a member to fill each vacancy, except in cities of more than 500,000 population. In cities of more than 500,000 population, the executive director of the board of election commissioners shall serve as a member of the board of canvassers to fill a temporary vacancy on that board. The board of canvassers shall prepare a statement certifying the names of those persons who have won nomination to the office. After each other election for a municipal office and each municipal referendum, the board of canvassers shall prepare a determination showing the names of the persons who are elected to each municipal office and the results of each municipal referendum. The board of canvassers shall file each statement and determination in the office of the municipal clerk or board of election commissioners.

(2m) BOARD OF ABSENTEE BALLOT CANVASSERS. (a) If a municipality elects to count absentee ballots in the manner provided for in s. 7.52, the municipality shall establish a board of absentee ballot canvassers as provided in par. (b).

(b) Except as provided in par. (c), the municipal board of absentee ballot canvassers shall be composed of the municipal clerk, or a qualified elector of the municipality designated by the clerk, and 2 other qualified electors of the municipality appointed by the clerk. The members of the board of absentee ballot canvassers shall serve for 2-year terms commencing on January 1 of each even-numbered year, except that any member who is appointed to fill a permanent vacancy shall serve for the unexpired term of the original appointee. If the municipal clerk’s office is vacant or if the clerk does not have an opponent whose name appears on the ballot, the mayor, president, or board chairperson of the municipality shall designate another qualified elector of the municipality to serve in lieu of the clerk for that election. If the clerk is a candidate at an election being canvassed, the clerk or the clerk’s designee may perform the clerk’s duties on the board of absentee ballot canvassers only if the clerk does not have an opponent whose name appears on the ballot. If the clerk is a candidate at the election being canvassed by the board of absentee ballot canvassers and has an opponent whose name appears on the ballot, the mayor, president, or board chairperson of the municipality shall designate another qualified elector of the municipality to serve in lieu of the clerk and his or her designee for that election. If any other member of the board of absentee ballot canvassers is a candidate at the election being canvassed, the clerk shall appoint another qualified elector of the municipality to temporarily fill the vacancy.

(c) Nothing in this subsection precludes a municipal clerk from appointing individuals to the board of absentee ballot canvassers who are simultaneously serving on any other board of canvassers.

(3) SCHOOL DISTRICT ELECTIONS. (a) In a common, union high or co-op school district, the school district clerk shall appoint 2 qualified electors of the school district prior to the date of the election being canvassed who shall, with the school district clerk, constitute the school district board of canvassers. If the school district clerk is a candidate at the election being canvassed, the other 2 members of the board of canvassers shall designate a 3rd member to serve in lieu of the clerk for that election. The school district clerk shall appoint a member to fill any other temporary vacancy on the board of canvassers. The canvass shall begin no later than 9 a.m. on the Tuesday after the election and shall continue, without adjournment, until completed. The board of canvassers may return defective returns to the municipal board of canvassers in the manner provided in s. 7.60 (3). If the board of canvassers meets before 4 p.m. on the Monday after the election and thereafter receives amended statements, tally sheets, and lists from a municipal clerk for provisional ballots that are eligible to be counted under s. 6.97 (4), the board of canvassers shall reconvene no later than 9 a.m. on the Tuesday after the election and shall adjust the returns accordingly. No later than 4 p.m. on the Tuesday after the election, the board of canvassers shall prepare a written statement showing the numbers of votes cast for each person for each office and for and against each question and shall prepare a determination showing the names of the persons who are elected to the school board and the results of any school district referendum. Following each primary election, the board of canvassers shall prepare a statement certifying the names of the persons who have won nomination to the school board. Each statement and determination shall be attested by each of the
canvassers. The board of canvassers shall file each statement and
determination in the school district office. The school district
clerk shall certify nominations after each primary and issue cer-
tificates of election to persons who are elected to the school board
after each election in the manner provided in sub. (4).

(b) In a 1st class city school district, the municipal board of
canvassers or election commissioners shall determine the results
of school district elections and referenda and shall file a written
statement and determination of the results for each election and
referendum in the office of the city clerk or board of election com-
misssioners. The board of election commissioners or city clerk
shall certify nominations after each primary and issue certificates
of election to persons who are elected to the board of school direct-
ors after each election in the manner provided in sub. (4).

(4) CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION. As soon as the deadline for fil-
ing a petition for a recount has passed, the municipal clerk shall
issue promptly a certificate of election to each person elected to
any municipal office, except that the municipal clerk need not wait
until expiration of the time allowed to file a petition for a recount
if there is no aggrieved party, as defined in s. 9.01 (1) (a) 5. When a
valid petition for a recount is filed, the municipal clerk shall not
issue the certificate of election for the office in question until the
reckoning is completed and the time allowed for filing an appeal
has passed, or if appealed until the appeal is decided on.

History: 1971 c. 304 s. 29 (2); 1977 c. 290, 427, 447; 1979 c. 260; 1981 c. 314;
a. 16 s. 2; 1999 a. 182; 2005 c. 451; 2007 a. 96; 2011 a. 115; 2015 a. 37, 229, 261;
2019 a. 18; 182.

The canvassing activities conducted at the municipal level pursuant to this section
and by school district canvassing boards constitute meetings of governmental bodies
and are subject to the requirements of the open meetings law. OAG 5−14.

While canvassing boards must provide the public a reasonable opportunity to mean-
ingfully observe their meetings, they may impose reasonable limits on public access
to the extent necessary to protect the effective and orderly conduct of the canvass.
The same principles of reasonableness govern the public’s opportunity to inspect
election documents and materials at canvassing board meetings. OAG 5−14.

7.54 Contested elections. In all contested election cases, the
contesting parties have the right to have the ballots opened and
to have all errors of the inspectors, either in counting or refusing
to count any ballot, corrected by the board of canvassers or court
deciding the contest. The ballots and related materials may be
opened only in open session of the board of canvassers or in open
court and in the presence of the official having custody of them.

History: 1983 a. 484.

7.60 County canvass. (1) KEEP OFFICE OPEN. On election
night the county clerk shall keep the clerk’s office open to receive
reports from the ward inspectors and shall post all returns. On
election night the clerk shall post all returns, by ward or reporting
unit, on an Internet site maintained by the county no later than 2
hours after receiving the returns.

(2) COUNTY BOARD OF CANVASSERS. The county clerk and 2
qualified electors of the county appointed by the clerk constitute the
county board of canvassers. The members of the board of can-
vassers shall serve for 2−year terms commencing on January 1 of
each even−numbered year, except that any member who is
appointed to fill a permanent vacancy shall serve for the unexpired
term of the original appointee. One member of the board of can-
vassers shall belong to a political party other than the clerk’s. The
county clerk shall designate a deputy clerk who shall perform the
clerk’s duties as a member of the board of canvassers in the event
that the county clerk’s office is vacant, or the clerk cannot perform
his or her duties. If the county clerk and designated deputy clerk
are both unable to perform their duties, the county executive or,
if there is no county executive, the chairperson of the county board
of supervisors shall designate another qualified elector of the
county to perform the clerk’s duties. If a member other than the
clerk cannot perform his or her duties, the clerk shall appoint
another member to serve. Except as otherwise provided in this
subsection, no person may serve on the county board of canvass-
ers if the person is a candidate for an office to be canvassed by that
board. If the clerk is a candidate at an election being canvassed, the
clerk may perform his or her duties on the board only if the clerk has no opponent whose name appears on the ballot, or, in
the case of a recount, if the office the clerk is seeking is not a subject
of the recount. If lists of candidates for the county board of can-
vassers are submitted to the county clerk by political party county
committees, the lists shall consist of at least 3 names and the clerk
shall choose the board members from the lists. Where there is a
county board of election commissioners, it shall serve as the board
of canvassers. If the county board of election commissioners
serves as the board of canvassers, the executive director of the
county board of election commissioners shall serve as a member
of the board of canvassers to fill a temporary vacancy on that
board.

(3) CANVASSING. Not later than 9 a.m. on the Tuesday after
each election the county board of canvassers shall open and publicly
examine the returns. If returns have not been received from any
election district or ward in the county, they shall dispatch a messenger
and the person having them shall deliver the returns to the
messenger. If, on examination, any of the returns received are
so informal or defective that the board cannot intelligently can-
vass them, they shall dispatch a messenger to deliver the returns
back to the county board of canvassers with written specifica-
tions of the informalities or defects and command them to imme-
diately complete the returns or remedy the defects, if timely
required and deliver them to the messenger. Every messenger
shall safely keep all returns, show them to no one but the munici-
pal clerk and board of canvassers and deliver them to the county
clerk with all possible dispatch. To acquire the necessary full
returns and remedy any informalities or defects the county board
of canvassers may adjourn no longer than one day at a time for
more than 2 days in all.

(4) STATEMENTS AND DETERMINATIONS. (a) The board of can-
vassers shall make separate duplicate statements showing the
numbers of votes cast for the offices of president and vice presi-
dent; state officials; U.S. senators and representatives in congress;
state legislators; justice; court of appeals judge; circuit judges;
district attorneys; and metropolitan sewerage commissioners, if
the commissioners are elected under s. 200.09 (11) (am). If a
municipal judge elected under s. 755.01 (4) serves a municipality
that is located partially within the county and candidates for that
judgeship file nomination papers in another county, the board of
canvassers shall prepare a duplicate statement showing the num-
bers of votes cast for that judgeship in that county for transmittal
to the other county. For partisan candidates, the statements shall
include the political party or principle designation, if any, next to the
name of each candidate. The board of canvassers shall also
prepare a statement showing the results of any county, technical
college district, or statewide referendum. Each statement shall
state the total number of votes cast in the county for each office;
the names of all persons for whom the votes were cast, as returned;
the number of votes cast for each person; and the number of votes
cast for and against any question submitted at a referendum. The
board of canvassers shall use one copy of each duplicate statement
to report to the elections commission, technical college district
board, or board of canvassers of any other county and shall file the
other statement in the office of the county clerk or board of elec-
tion commissioners.

(b) The board of canvassers shall then prepare a statement show-
ing the results of any county referendum. Following any primary
election, the board of canvassers shall prepare a statement certifying
the names of all persons who have won nomination to any
county office or any municipal judge-ship if the judge is elected under s. 755.01 (4) and candidates for
that judgeship file nomination papers in that county. The board of
canvassers shall likewise prepare a written determination show-
ing the results of any county referendum. Following any primary
election, the board of canvassers shall prepare a statement certifying
the names of all persons who have won nomination to any
county office or any municipal judge-ship, if the judge is elected
under s. 755.01 (4) and candidates for that judgeship file nomina-
tion papers in that county. The board of canvassers shall file all

2019−20 Wisconsin Statutes updated through 2021 Wis. Act 101 and through all Supreme Court and Controlled Substances
Board Orders filed before and in effect on February 1, 2022. Published and certified under s. 35.18. Changes effective after
February 1, 2022, are designated by NOTES. (Published 2−1−22)
statements and determinations in the office of the county clerk or board of election commissioners.

(c) In preparing the statements and determinations, the board of canvassers shall carefully review the tally sheets and inspectors’ statement. The board of canvassers may omit the names of individuals whose names do not appear on the ballot and who receive a comparatively small number of votes. The board of canvassers shall designate votes received by such individuals as scattering votes. The board of canvassers shall append to each statement and determination a tabulation of the votes cast at each election district, ward or combination of wards authorized under s. 5.15 (6) (b) in the county for each office and each individual, whether the votes are canvassed or not, as well as the total canvassed votes cast for each individual and each office, except where scattering votes are designated. If any votes are rejected, the board of canvassers shall specify the reasons therefor.

(d) Each statement and determination issued under pars. (a) and (b) shall be certified as correct and attested to by each canvasser’s signature.

(5) REPORTING. (a) Immediately following the canvass, the county clerk shall deliver or transmit to the elections commission a certified copy of each statement of the county board of canvassers for president and vice president, state officials, senators and representatives in congress, state legislators, justices, court of appeals judge, circuit judge, district attorney, and metropolitan sewerage commissioners, if the commissioners are elected under s. 200.09 (11) (am). The statement shall record the returns for each office or referendum by ward, unless combined returns are authorized under s. 5.15 (6) (b) in which case the statement shall record the returns for each group of combined wards. Following primaries the county clerk shall enclose on forms prescribed by the elections commission the names, party or principle designation, if any, and number of votes received by each candidate recorded in the same manner. The county clerk shall deliver or transmit the certified statement to the elections commission no later than 9 days after each primary except the partisan primary, no later than 10 days after the partisan primary and any other election except the general election, and no later than 14 days after the general election. The board of canvassers shall deliver or transmit a certified copy of each statement for any technical college district referendum to the secretary of the technical college district board.

(b) If the board of canvassers becomes aware of a material mistake in the canvass of an election for state or national office or a statewide or technical college district referendum prior to the close of business on the day the elections commission receives returns from the last county board of canvassers with respect to that canvass, the board of canvassers may petition the elections commission to reopen and correct the canvass. The elections commission shall direct the canvass to be reopened and corrected if it determines that the public interest so requires. If the elections commission directs the canvass to be reopened, the board of canvassers shall reconvene and transmit a certified corrected copy of the canvass statement to the elections commission or secretary of the technical college district board.

(6) CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION. Immediately after expiration of the time allowed to file a petition for a recount the county clerk shall issue a certificate of election to each person who is elected to any county office, except that the county clerk need not wait until expiration of the time allowed to file a petition for a recount if there is no aggrieved party, as defined in s. 9.01 (1) (a) 5. The certificate notice shall state the amount of the required official bond, if any. When a petition for a recount is filed, the county clerk shall not issue the certificate of election for the office in question until the recount has been completed and the time allowed for filing an appeal has passed, or if appealed until the appeal is decided.

(7) OFFICIAL CANVASS RECORD. After the certificates of election have been prepared under sub. (6), the county clerk shall retain one copy of the official canvass for county offices and referenda in his or her office for public inspection.


The canvassing activities conducted by county canvassing boards are meetings of governmental bodies subject to the requirements of the open meetings law. While canvassing boards must provide the public a reasonable opportunity to meaningfully observe their meetings, they may impose reasonable limits on public access to the extent necessary to protect the effective and orderly conduct of the canvass. The same principles of reasonableness govern the public’s opportunity to inspect election documents and materials at canvassing board meetings. OAG 5–14.

7.70 State canvass. (1) RECORDING AND PRESERVING RETURNS. (a) Upon receipt of the certified statements from the county clerks, the commission shall record the election results by counties and file and carefully preserve the statements.

(b) If any county clerk fails or neglects to forward any statements, the commission may require the clerk to do so immediately and if not received by the 8th day after a primary, or by the 11th day after any other election, the commission may dispatch a special messenger to obtain them. Whenever it appears upon the face of any statement that an error has been made in reporting or computing, the commission may return it to the county clerk for correction.

(3) CANVASSING. (a) The chairperson of the commission or a designee of the chairperson appointed by the chairperson to canvass a specific election shall publicly canvass the returns and make his or her certifications and determinations on or before the 2nd Tuesday following a spring primary, the 15th day of May following a spring election, the 3rd Wednesday following a partisan primary, the first day of December following a general election, the 2nd Thursday following a special primary, or within 18 days after any special election.

(b) The commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee shall examine the certified statements of the county boards of canvassers. If it appears that any material mistake has been made in the computation of votes, or any county board of canvassers failed to canvass the votes or omitted votes from any ward or election district in the county, the commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee may dispatch a messenger to the county clerk with written instructions to certify the facts concerning the mistake or omission. If the votes were not canvassed, a clerk to whom such instructions are delivered shall immediately make a true and full answer, sign it, affix the county seal and deliver it to the messenger. The messenger shall deliver it with all possible dispatch to the commission.

(c) The chairperson of the commission or the chairperson’s designee shall conclude the state canvass within 10 days after its commencement.

(d) When the certified statements and returns are received, the chairperson of the commission or the chairperson’s designee shall proceed to examine and make a statement of the total number of votes cast at any election for the offices involved in the election for president and vice president; a statement for each of the offices of governor, lieutenant governor, if a primary, and a joint statement for the offices of governor and lieutenant governor, if a general election; a statement for each of the offices of secretary of state, state treasurer, attorney general, and state superintendent; for U.S. senator; representative in congress for each congressional district; the state legislature; justice; court of appeals judge; circuit judge; district attorney; metropolitan sewerage commission, if the commissioners are elected under s. 200.09 (11) (am); and for any referenda questions submitted by the legislature.

(e) The chairperson of the commission or the chairperson’s designee shall make a special statement to the commission as soon as possible after the canvass of the general election certifying the
name of each political party which receives at least one percent of the vote cast in such election for any statewide office.

(f) The statements shall show the persons’ names receiving votes, and any referenda questions; the whole number of votes given to each; and an individual listing by the districts or counties in which they were given. The names of persons not regularly nominated who received only a comparatively small number of votes may be omitted and their votes designated as scattering votes.

(g) Following each primary election, the chairman of the commission or the chairperson’s designee shall prepare a statement certifying the results of the primary, which shall indicate the names of the persons who have won nomination to any state or national office. Following each other election, the chairperson of the commission or the chairperson’s designee shall prepare a statement certifying the results of the election and shall attach to the statement a certificate of determination which shall indicate the names of persons who have been elected to any state or national office. The chairperson of the commission or the chairperson’s designee shall likewise prepare a statement and certificate for any statewide referendum. The chairperson of the commission or the chairperson’s designee shall deliver each statement and determination to the commission.

(h) Whenever a referendum question submitted to a vote of the people is approved, the commission shall record it and the secretary of state shall have the record bound in the volume containing the original enrolled laws passed at the next succeeding session of the legislature and have the record published with the laws thereof. Whenever a constitutional amendment or other statewide validating or ratifying referendum question which is approved by the people does not expressly state the date of effectiveness, it shall become effective at the time the chairperson of the commission or the chairperson’s designee certifies that the amendment or referendum question is approved.

(i) The commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee shall canvass only regular returns made by the county board of canvassers and shall not count or canvass any additional or supplemental returns or statements made by the county board or any other board or person. The commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee shall not count or canvass any statement or return which has been made by the county board of canvassers at any other time than that provided in s. 7.60. This provision does not apply to any return made subsequent to a recount under s. 9.01, when the return is accepted in lieu of any prior return from the same county for the same office; or to a statement given to the commission chairperson or chairperson’s designee or a messenger sent by the chairperson or designee to obtain a correction.

(5) CERTIFICATES OF ELECTION. (a) The commission shall record in its office each certified statement and determination made by the commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee. Immediately after the expiration of the time allowed to file a petition for recount, the commission shall make and transmit to each person declared elected a certificate of election under the seal of the commission, except that the commission need not wait until expiration of the time allowed to file a petition for recount if there is no aggrieved party, as defined in s. 9.01 (1) (a) 5. It shall also prepare similar certificates, attested by the commission adminis-

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tor, addressed to the U.S. house of representatives, stating the names of those persons elected as representatives to the congress from this state. In the case of U.S. senators, the commission shall prepare a certificate of election for the governor’s signature, and the governor shall sign and affix the great seal of the state and transmit the certificate to the president of the U.S. senate. The certificate shall be countersigned by the secretary of state. If a person elected was elected to fill a vacancy, the certificate shall so indicate. When a valid petition for recount is filed, the commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee may not certify a nomination, and the governor or commission may not issue a certificate of election until the recount has been completed and the time allowed for filing an appeal has passed, or if appealed until the appeal is decided.

(b) For presidential electors, the commission shall prepare a certificate showing the determination of the results of the canvass and the names of the persons elected, and the governor shall sign, affix the great seal of the state, and transmit the certificate by registered mail to the U.S. administrator of general services. The governor shall also prepare 6 duplicate originals of such certificate and deliver them to one of the presidential electors on or before the first Monday after the 2nd Wednesday in December.

History: 1971 c. 304 s. 29 (2); 1973 c. 334 ss. 15, 57; 1975 c. 93, 199; 1977 c. 107, 187, 427, 449; 1979 c. 221, 260, 328; 1983 a. 484; 1985 a. 89, 304; 1987 a. 391; 1989 a. 31, 192; 1995 a. 16 s. 2; 1997 a. 27, 1999 a. 150 s. 672; 1999 a. 182; 2005 a. 451; 2007 a. 1; 2011 a. 32, 75; 2015 a. 118 ss. 93 to 95, 266 (10); 2019 a. 182.

Unless a constitutional amendment provides otherwise, it takes effect upon the certification of a statewide canvass of the votes as provided in sub. (3) (b). The legislature has the authority under article XII, section 1, of the Wisconsin Constitution to adopt reasonable election laws to provide that state constitutional amendments are effective after canvass and certification. State v. Gonzalez, 2002 WI 59, 253 Wis. 2d 134, 645 N.W.2d 264, 01−0224.

Although the GAB chairperson or his or her designee is expressly required to “publicly canvass the returns” under sub. (5) (a), those canvassing activities are not subject to the separate requirements of the open meetings law. OAG 5−14.

7.75 Presidential electors meeting. (1) The electors for president and vice president shall meet at the state capitol following the presidential election at 12:00 noon the first Monday after the 2nd Wednesday in December. If there is a vacancy in the office of an elector due to death, refusal to act, failure to attend or other cause, the electors present shall immediately proceed to fill by ballot, by a plurality of votes, the electoral college vacancy. When all electors are present, or the vacancies filled, they shall perform their required duties under the constitution and laws of the United States.

(2) The presidential electors, when convened, shall vote by ballot for that person for president and that person for vice president who are, respectively, the candidates of the political party which nominated them under s. 8.18, the candidates whose names appeared on the nomination papers filed under s. 8.20, or the candidates or candidates who filed their names under s. 8.185 (2), except that at least one of the persons for whom the electors vote may not be an inhabitant of this state. A presidential elector is not required to vote for a candidate who is deceased at the time of the meeting.

History: 1979 c. 246.

7.80 Notice of election. Personal service or service by first class mail of a certificate of election is official notification for all legal purposes to any person of his or her election to office.

History: 1977 c. 427.