CHAPTER 9
POST–ELECTION ACTIONS; DIRECT LEGISLATION

9.01 Recount. (1) PETITION; FEES; GENERAL PROCEDURES. (a) 1. Any candidate voted for at any election who is an aggrieved party, as determined under subd. 5., or any elector who voted upon any referendum question at any election may petition for a recount. The petitioner shall file a verified petition or petitions with the proper clerk or body under par. (ar) not earlier than the time of completion of the canvass following canvassing of any valid provisional ballots under s. 6.97(4) and, except as provided in this subdivision, not later than 5 p.m. on the 3rd business day following the last meeting day of the municipal or county board of canvassers determining the election for that office or on that referendum question following canvassing of all valid provisional ballots or, if more than one board of canvassers makes the determination, not later than 5 p.m. on the 3rd business day following the last meeting day of the last board of canvassers which makes a determination following canvassing of all valid provisional ballots. If the commission chairperson or chairperson’s designee makes the determination for the office or the referendum question, the petitioner shall file the petition not earlier than the last meeting day of the last county board of canvassers to make a statement in the election or referendum following canvassing of all valid provisional ballots and not later than 5 p.m. on the 3rd business day following the day on which the commission receives the last statement from a county board of canvassers for the election or referendum following canvassing of all valid provisional ballots. With regard to an election for president, the petitioner shall file the petition not later than 5 p.m. on the first business day following the day on which the commission receives the last statement from a county board of canvassers for the election following canvassing of all valid provisional ballots.

2. Each verified petition under subd. 1. shall state all of the following:
   a. That at the election the petitioner was a candidate for the office in question or that the petitioner voted on the referendum question in issue.
   b. That the petitioner is informed and believes that a mistake or fraud has been committed in a specified ward or municipality in the counting and return of the votes cast for the office or upon the question or that another specified defect, irregularity, or illegality occurred in the conduct of the election.
   c. If the petitioner is a candidate voted for at the election for which the petitioner seeks a recount, that the petitioner is an aggrieved party.

3. The petition under subd. 1. shall specify each ward, or each municipality where no wards exist, in which a recount is desired. If a recount is requested for all wards within a jurisdiction, each ward need not be specified.

4. The petition under subd. 1. may be amended to include information discovered as a result of the investigation of the board of canvassers or the commission chairperson or chairperson’s designee after the filing of the petition if the petitioner moves to amend the petition as soon as possible after the petitioner discovers, or reasonably should have discovered, the information that is the subject of the amendment and if the petitioner was unable to include the information in the original petition.

5. In this paragraph, “aggrieved party” means any of the following:
   a. For an election at which 4,000 or fewer votes are cast for the office that the candidate seeks, a candidate who trails the leading candidate, as defined under par. (ag) 5., by no more than 40 votes, as determined under par. (ag) 5.
   b. For an election at which more than 4,000 votes are cast for the office that the candidate seeks, a candidate who trails the leading candidate, as defined under par. (ag) 5., by no more than 1 percent of the total votes cast for that office, as determined under par. (ag) 5.

   (ad) Upon receiving a petition for a recount, the clerk or body receiving the petition shall reasonably estimate any fee due under par. (ag) 2. The clerk or body shall provide the petitioner promptly with the total due or estimate.

   (ag) 1. If the difference between the votes cast for the leading candidate and those cast for the petitioner or the difference between the affirmative and negative votes cast upon any referendum question is less than 10 if 4,000 or fewer votes are cast or not more than 0.25 percent of the total votes cast for the office or on the question if more than 4,000 votes are cast following canvassing of all valid provisional and absentee ballots, the petitioner is not required to pay a fee.

   2. If subd. 1. does not apply to the difference between the votes cast for the leading candidate and those cast for the petitioner or the difference between the affirmative and negative votes cast upon any referendum question following canvassing of all valid provisional and absentee ballots, the petitioner shall pay a fee equal to the actual cost incurred by the commission to provide services for performing the recount.

   3. All fees estimated under par. (ad) shall be prepaid in cash or another form of payment which is acceptable to the officer to whom they are paid. No petition for which a fee is required is valid unless the proper calculated or estimated fee is paid at the time of filing.

   3m. The petitioner shall pay any balance owing toward the fee due under subd. 2. within 45 days after the clerk or body receiving the petition provides the petitioner with a written statement of the amount due. If the petitioner has overpaid the fee due under subd. 2., the clerk or body receiving the petition shall refund the amount overpaid within 45 days after the board of canvassers makes its determination in the recount. If, as a result of the recount, the petitioner is the leading candidate, or the majority of votes cast on the referendum changes from affirmative to negative or from negative to affirmative, the clerk or body receiving the petition shall refund the amount paid within 45 days after the board of canvassers makes its determination in the recount. For purposes of this subdivision, a petitioner has not overpaid the fees due under subd. 2. and is therefore not entitled to a refund under this subdivision, if the recount results in a difference in the votes cast that is below the threshold for paying the fee under subd. 2.
4. The commission shall deposit all moneys received by it into the account under s. 20.510 (1) (g), and shall pay the fees required for each recount to the county clerks of the counties in which the recount is to be held and shall retain the amount necessary to pay for the actual cost incurred by the commission to provide services for performing the recount. The county clerk shall deposit fees received by him or her with the county treasurer. The municipal clerk shall deposit fees received by him or her with the municipal treasurer.

5. In this paragraph, the “leading candidate” includes every individual whose vote total at the time of the filing of the recount petition would entitle the individual to election or nomination to office. In an election in which more than one office of the same type is to be filled from the same territory, the number and percentage of votes cast under this paragraph shall be determined by first dividing the total number of votes cast for the office by the number of offices being filled at the election from the same territory.

6. The board of canvassers shall mark, set aside and carefully preserve all ballots removed in recounting that the number of voters exceeds the number of ballots, the board of canvassers shall draw a number of ballots equal to the number of ballots still exceeds the number of voters reduced by the number of ballots removed under s. 7.51 (2) (e).

7. When a machine is recounted, the board of canvassers shall proceed to inspect and examine the machine showing the votes cast for each office or referendum specified in the petition, and shall make a record of the votes for that office or referendum as described in s. 7.51 (2) (e).
shown on that voting machine, which they shall certify as correct, in the presence of at least one witness.

8. If upon the recount it is found that the original canvass of the returns has been correctly made from a voting machine and that a discrepancy still remains unaccounted for, the board of canvassers shall publicly unlock the voting and counting mechanism of the machine, and shall proceed to examine and test the machine to determine the cause of the discrepancy in returns from the machine. A similar test shall be performed for electronic voting machines to ascertain whether there is any malfunction in the machine. After the completion of the examination and test, the board of canvassers shall prepare a statement giving the results of the examination and test. The statement shall be witnessed by at least one witness.

8m. Where a voting machine or electronic voting system is used, and an error in the vote total as shown on the machine or record of votes cast is clearly apparent, the board of canvassers may change the vote total as shown by the machine or system and certify or use a different total to certify a different result than is indicated by the machine or system if there is evidence of a specific malfunction in the machine or system, if the malfunction could reasonably have caused the error, and if clear and convincing evidence exists which indicates an exact actual total of votes cast. The burden of demonstrating that a vote total shown on a machine or record of votes cast is incorrect rests with the party seeking to change the recorded result on the basis of clear and convincing evidence.

8s. If an electronic voting system is used in which ballots are distributed to electors, and the board of canvassers makes a determination of elector intent under s. 7.50, the board of canvassers shall add to the result generated by the automatic tabulating equipment any votes counted by the board of canvassers in making its determination.

9. If upon the recount it appears that the original canvass of the votes cast by the election officials was incorrect, the statements and determinations of the board of canvassers shall be corrected accordingly.

10. Recounts at polling places utilizing an electronic voting system in which ballots are distributed to electors shall be performed in accordance with the procedure for recounting paper ballots as applicable, except as provided in s. 5.90. Recounts at polling places utilizing electronic voting machines shall be performed in accordance with the procedure for recounting votes cast on mechanical voting machines, insofar as applicable, except as provided in s. 5.90.

11. All steps of the recount shall be performed publicly. Except as provided in subd. 12., all materials and ballots may be viewed and identified by the candidates, the person demanding the recount and their authorized representatives and counsel, but only members of the board of canvassers and tabulators assisting them may touch any of the materials or ballots. The candidates, the person demanding the recount and their authorized representatives and counsel may object to the counting of any ballot. Any errors shall be corrected.

12. Except as authorized in s. 6.47 (8), the board of canvassers shall not permit access to the name of any elector who has obtained a confidential listing under s. 6.47 (2) during the recount.

(2) NOTICE TO CANDIDATES. When the recount concerns an election for an office, the clerk or body with whom the petition is filed shall promptly prepare a copy of the petition for delivery to each opposing candidate for the same office whose name appears on the ballot. In a recount proceeding for a partisan primary, the clerk or body shall prepare a copy of the petition for delivery to each opposing candidate for the same party nomination for the same office, to each opposing candidate for the party nomination of each other party for the same office and to each independent candidate qualifying to have his or her name placed on the ballot for the succeeding election. A candidate or agent designated by a candidate may personally accept delivery of a copy of the petition. Upon such delivery, the clerk or body shall require the candidate or agent to sign a receipt therefor. If a candidate or agent does not personally accept delivery, the clerk or body shall then promptly deliver the copies of the petition to the sheriff, who shall promptly deliver the copies of the petition to each candidate at the address given on the candidate’s nomination papers, without fee, in the manner provided for service of a summons in civil actions.

(3) REPRESENTATION AND OBSERVATION. The petitioner, all opposing candidates and interested persons shall be entitled to be present in person and by counsel to observe the proceedings.

(4) RIGHT TO COMPLETE RECOUNT. Whenever a recount petition for part of the wards within a jurisdiction or district, or for part of the municipalities within a district where there are no wards, is filed under this section, the opposing candidate, or any voter or other interested party including a municipality if on a referendum question, may similarly file a petition for recount in any or all of the remaining wards or municipalities in the jurisdiction or district. The petition shall be filed not later than 5 p.m. 2 days after the board of canvassers completes the first recount. The proper board of canvassers shall reconvene at 9 a.m. on the next business day following the filing of the petition and proceed to recount the ballots in all wards or municipalities specified and to otherwise review the allegations of fact contained in the petition. Any errors shall be corrected.

(5) OATHS, MINUTES, WITNESS FEES, TABULATORS, TIMING, PUBLICATION. (a) The board of canvassers or the commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee shall keep complete minutes of all proceedings before the board of canvassers or the chairperson or designee. The minutes shall include a record of objections and offers of evidence. If the board of canvassers or the commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee receives exhibits from any party, the board of canvassers or the chairperson or designee shall number and preserve the exhibits. The board of canvassers or the chairperson or chairperson’s designee shall make specific findings of fact with respect to any irregularity raised in the petition or discovered during the recount. Any member of the board of canvassers or the chairperson or chairperson’s designee may administer oaths, certify official acts, and issue subpoenas for purposes of this section. Witness fees shall be paid by the county. In the case of proceedings before the commission chairperson or chairperson’s designee, witness fees shall be paid by the commission.

(b) The board of canvassers conducting a recount may select and employ tabulators to assist it in its duties. Tabulators shall perform their duties under the direction of the board of canvassers. Only the members of the board of canvassers are competent to make any determination as to the validity of any vote tabulated. Compensation of tabulators shall be determined under s. 7.03.

(bm) Upon the completion of its proceedings, a board of canvassers shall deliver to the commission one copy of the minutes of the proceedings kept under par. (a). In addition, in the case of a recount of an election for state or national office, for each candidate whose name appears on the ballot for that office under the name of a political party, the board of canvassers shall deliver one copy of the minutes to the chief officer, if any, who is named in any registration statement filed under s. 11.0302 by the state committee of that political party, and in the case of a recount of an election for county office, for each candidate whose name appears on the ballot for that office under the name of a political party, the board of canvassers shall deliver one copy of the minutes to the chief officer, if any, who is named in any registration statement filed under s. 11.0302 by the county committee of that political party.

(c) If the recount is made by a municipal or county board of canvassers and the result is required to be reported to a county board of canvassers or to the commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee, the board of canvassers making the initial recount shall immediately certify the results to the county board of canvassers or to the commission chairperson or designee. If a
county board of canvassers receives such results, it shall then con- 
vene not later than 9 a.m. on the next business day following 
receipt to examine the returns and determine the results. If the 
commission chairperson or the chairperson’s designee receives 
such results, the chairperson or designee shall publicly examine 
the returns and determine the results not later than 9 a.m. on the 
3rd business day following receipt, but if that day is earlier than 
the latest day permitted for that election under s. 7.70 (3) (a), the 
commission chairperson or designee may examine the returns and 
determine the results not later than the day specified in s. 7.70 (3) 
(a).

(d) Whenever publication of an original determination is 
required, the county or municipal clerk shall publish the recount 
determination in the same manner.

(6) APPEAL TO CIRCUIT COURT. (a) Within 5 business days after 
completion of the recount determination by the board of canvass-
ers in all counties concerned, or within 5 business days after com-
pletion of the recount determination by the commission chair-
person or the chairperson’s designee whenever a determination 
that could not with due diligence have been obtained during 
during the recount, and except that the court may receive evidence 
noted at an earlier time because a party was not represented 
by counsel in all or part of a recount proceeding. A party who fails 
to object or fails to offer evidence of a defect or irregularity during 
the recount waives the right to object or offer evidence before the 
court except in the case of evidence that was unavailable to a party 
performing due diligence at the time of the recount or newly dis-
covered evidence that could not with due diligence have been 
obtained during the recount or evidence received by the court due 
to unavailability of counsel during the recount.

(d) The court shall set aside or modify the determination of 
the board of canvassers or the commission chairperson or the 
chairperson’s designee if it finds that the board of canvassers or the 
chairperson or chairperson’s designee has erroneously inter-
preted a provision of law and a correct interpretation compels a particular 
action. If the determination depends on any fact found by the 
board of canvassers or the commission chairperson or the chair-
person’s designee, the court may not substitute its judgment for 
that of the board of canvassers or the chairperson or designee as 
to the weight of the evidence on any disputed finding of fact. The 
court shall set aside the determination if it finds that the determina-
tion depends on any finding of fact that is not supported by sub-
stantial evidence.

(9) APPEAL TO COURT OF APPEALS. (a) Within 30 days after 
entry of the order of the circuit court, a party aggrieved by the 
order may appeal to the court of appeals.

(b) If an appeal is filed in respect to an election which is held 
in more than one court of appeals district, the chief justice of the 
supreme court shall consolidate all appeals relating to that election 
and designate one district to hear the appeal, except that if an 
appeal is filed in respect to an election for statewide office or a 
statewide referendum, the appeal shall be heard by the 4th district 
court of appeals.

(c) The court of appeals shall give precedence to the appeal 
over other matters not accorded similar precedence by law.

(10) STANDARD FORMS AND METHODS. The commission shall 
 prescribe standard forms and procedures for the making of 
 recounts under this section. The procedures prescribed by the 
commission shall require the boards of canvassers in recounts 
involving more than one board of canvassers to consult with the 
commission staff prior to beginning any recount in order to ensure 
that uniform procedures are used, to the extent practicable, in such 
 recounts.

(11) EXCLUSIVE REMEDY. This section constitutes the exclu-
sive judicial remedy for testing the right to hold an elective 
office as the result of an alleged irregularity, defect or mistake com-
ded during the voting or canvassing process.

History: 1971 c. 251; 1971 c. 304 s. 29 (2); 1971 c. 336; 1973 c. 313; 1973 c. 334 
23 to 26, 57; 1975 c. 41, 422; 1977 c. 394 s. 53; 1979 c. 427; 1979 c. 200; 1979 
c. 260 ss. 66 to 68, 93, 1979 c. 311, 355; 1983 a. 185; 1983 a. 484 s. 172 (3); 1983 
a. 538; 1985 a. 304; 1987 a. 391; 1989 a. 192; 1993 a. 213; 1997 a. 27; 1999 a. 49, 
2015 a. 356 s. 117; 2015 a. 118 ss. 107 c. 261; 2017 a. 120, 366.

Cross−reference: See also s. EL 6.04, Wis. adm. code.

A challenge of compliance with procedures for absent voting is within the board of 
canvassers’ jurisdiction. Absent canvass, fraud, or undue influence, substan-
tial compliance with statutory voting procedures is sufficient. Appeal From Recount 
in Election Contest, 105 Wis. 2d 468, 313 N.W.2d 869 (Ct. App. 1981).

Sub. (8) does not require the party against whom the board rules to object to the 
board’s determination to preserve the issue for judicial review. Clifton v. Colby 
School District, 143 Wis. 2d 581, 421 N.W.2d 852 (Ct. App. 1988).

Post−election eligibility challenges are properly brought under this section. Langer 
The recount statute does not violate due process or equal protection and does not deny the electorate the right to have the winning candidate hold office. The relationship of recount and quo warranto actions is discussed. Shroble v. Prusener, 185 Wis. 2d 103, 517 N.W.2d 169 (1994).

When the board of canvassers’ actions in a recount reflected proper application of the statutes, the reviewing court’s finding that the board had another option available to it was immaterial. DelBroux v. City of Appleton Board of Canvassers, 206 Wis. 2d 321, 557 N.W.2d 423 (Ct. App. 1996), 96-1287.

This section is the exclusive remedy for any claimed election fraud or irregularity. Generally, to successfully challenge an election, the challenger must show by a preponderance of the evidence that a challenged irregularity prejudiced election results, that is, that a challenged irregularity had an effect on the outcome of the election. State v. Romano, 115 Wis. 2d 277, 341 N.W.2d 689 (1983), 83-0140.

DeBroux v. City of Appleton Board of Canvassers, 206 Wis. 2d 321, 557 N.W.2d 423 (Ct. App. 1996), 96-1287.

6.03 (3).

A party’s failure to timely file an appeal under sub. (6) does not preclude the party from later intervening in another’s appeal. To appeal under sub. (6) requires a party to be aggrieved by the decision. A party acting in a representative capacity must first obtain authority from the individual bringing the challenge.

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The sub. (6) (a) requirement that a vote−recount appeal to the circuit court be served on the other candidates is fundamental. That a candidate who was not served knew about the appeal and sought to be served was immaterial. DeBroux v. City of Appleton Board of Canvassers, 206 Wis. 2d 321, 557 N.W.2d 423 (Ct. App. 1996), 96-1287.

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DeBroux v. City of Appleton Board of Canvassers, 206 Wis. 2d 321, 557 N.W.2d 423 (Ct. App. 1996), 96-1287.
school district officials. City, village, town, town sanitary district, and school district officials are recalled under sub. (4).

(b) Within 10 days after the petition is offered for filing, the officer against whom the petition is filed may file a written challenge with the official, specifying any alleged insufficiency. If a challenge is filed, the petitioner may file a written rebuttal to the challenge with the official within 5 days after the challenge is filed. If a rebuttal is filed, the officer against whom the petition is filed may file a reply to any new matter raised in the rebuttal within 2 days after the rebuttal is filed. Within 14 days after the expiration of the time allowed for filing a reply to a rebuttal, the official shall file the certificate or an amended certificate. Within 31 days after the petition is offered for filing, the official with whom the petition is offered for filing shall determine by careful examination whether the petition on its face is sufficient and so state in a certificate attached to the petition. If the official finds that the amended petition is sufficient, the official shall file the petition and call a recall election to be held on the Tuesday of the 6th week commencing after the date of filing of the petition. If Tuesday is a legal holiday, the recall election shall be held on the first day after Tuesday which is not a legal holiday. If the official finds that the petition is insufficient, the certificate shall state the particulars creating the insufficiency. The petition may be amended to correct any insufficiency within 5 days following the affixing of the original certificate. Within 5 days after the offering of the amended petition for filing, the official with whom the petition is filed shall again carefully examine the face of the petition to determine sufficiency and shall attach a certificate stating the findings. Upon showing of good cause, the circuit court for the county in which the petition is offered for filing may grant an extension of any of the time periods provided in this paragraph.

(bm) Within 7 days after an official makes a final determination of sufficiency or insufficiency of a recall petition under par. (b), the petitioner or the officer against whom the recall petition is filed may file a petition for a writ of mandamus or prohibition with the circuit court for the county where the recall petition is offered for filing. Upon filing of such a petition, the only matter before the court shall be whether the recall petition is sufficient. The court may stay the effect of the official’s order while the petition is under advisement and may order the official to revise the election schedule contained in the order if a revised schedule is necessitated by judicial review. Whenever the recall petitioner files a petition under this paragraph, the officer against whom the recall petition is filed shall be a party to the proceeding. The court shall give the matter precedence over other matters not accorded similar precedence by law.

(c) The official against whom the recall petition is filed shall be a candidate at the recall election without nomination unless the official resigns within 10 days after the original filing of the petition. Candidates for the office may be nominated under the usual procedure of nomination for a special election by filing nomination papers not later than 5 p.m. on the 4th Tuesday preceding the election and have their names placed on the ballot at the recall election.

(d) If more than 2 persons compete for a nonpartisan office, a recall primary shall be held. The names of the 2 persons receiving the highest number of votes in the recall primary shall be certified to appear on the ballot in the recall election, but if any person receives a majority of the total number of votes cast in the recall primary, a recall election shall not be held. If the incumbent receives a majority of the votes cast, the incumbent shall be retained in office for the remainder of the term. If another candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, that candidate shall be elected to serve for the remainder of the term. Write-in votes are permitted only at a recall primary or at a recall election in which no primary is held.

(e) For any partisan office, a recall primary shall be held for each political party which is entitled to a separate ballot under s. 5.62 (1) (b) or (2) and from which more than one candidate competes for the party’s nomination in the recall election. The primary ballot shall be prepared in accordance with s. 5.62, insofar as applicable. The person receiving the highest number of votes in the recall primary for each political party shall be that party’s candidate in the recall election. Independent candidates shall be shown on the ballot for the recall election only.

(f) If a recall primary is required, the date specified under par. (b) shall be the date of the recall primary and the recall election shall be held on the Tuesday of the 4th week commencing after the recall primary or, if that Tuesday is a legal holiday, on the first day after that Tuesday which is not a legal holiday.

(4) CITY, VILLAGE, TOWN, TOWN SANITARY DISTRICT, AND SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICES. (a) Within 10 days after a petition for the recall of a city, village, town, town sanitary district, or school district official, is offered for filing, the officer against whom the petition is filed may file a written challenge with the municipal clerk or board of election commissioners or school district clerk with whom it is filed, specifying any alleged insufficiency. If a challenge is filed, the petitioner may file a written rebuttal to the challenge with the clerk or board of election commissioners within 5 days after the challenge is filed. If a rebuttal is filed, the officer against whom the petition is filed may file a reply to any new matter raised in the rebuttal within 2 days after the rebuttal is filed. Within 14 days after the expiration of the time allowed for filing a reply to a rebuttal, the clerk or board of election commissioners shall file the certificate or an amended certificate. Within 31 days after the petition is offered for filing, the clerk or board of election commissioners shall determine by careful examination of the face of the petition whether the petition is sufficient and shall so state in a certificate attached to the petition. If the petition is found to be insufficient, the certificate shall state the particulars creating the insufficiency. The petition may be amended to correct any insufficiency within 5 days following the affixing of the original certificate. Within 2 days after the offering of the amended petition for filing, the clerk or board of election commissioners shall file the certificate or an amended certificate. Within 31 days after the petition is offered for filing, the clerk or board of election commissioners shall again carefully examine the face of the petition to determine sufficiency and shall attach to the petition a certificate stating the findings. Immediately upon finding an original or amended petition sufficient, except in cities over 500,000 population, the municipal clerk or school district clerk shall transmit the petition to the governing body or to the school board. Immediately upon finding an original or amended petition sufficient, in cities over 500,000 population, the board of election commissioners shall file the petition in its office.

(d) Promptly upon receipt of a certificate under par. (a), the governing body, school board, or board of election commissioners shall call a recall election. The recall election shall be held on the Tuesday of the 6th week commencing after the date on which the certificate is filed, except that if Tuesday is a legal holiday the recall election shall be held on the first day after Tuesday which is not a legal holiday.

(e) The official against whom the recall petition is filed shall be a candidate at the recall election without nomination unless the official resigns within 10 days after the date of the certificate. Candidates for the office may be nominated under the usual procedure of nomination for a special election by filing nomination papers or declarations of candidacy not later than 5 p.m. on the 4th Tuesday preceding the election and have their names placed on the ballot at the recall election.

(f) If more than 2 persons compete for an office, a recall primary shall be held. The names of the 2 persons receiving the highest number of votes in the recall primary shall be certified to appear on the ballot in the recall election, but if any person receives a majority of the total number of votes cast in the recall primary, a recall election shall not be held. If the incumbent receives a majority of the votes cast, the incumbent shall be retained in office for the remainder of the term. If another candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, that candidate shall be elected to serve for the remainder of the term. Write-in votes are permitted only at a recall primary or at a recall election in which no primary is held.
(g) If a recall primary is required, the date specified under par. (d) shall be the date of the recall primary and the recall election shall be held on the Tuesday of the 4th week commencing after the recall primary or, if that Tuesday is a legal holiday, on the first day after that Tuesday which is not a legal holiday.

(h) All candidates for any village, town, and town sanitary district office, other than the official against whom the recall petition is filed, shall file nomination papers, regardless of the method of nomination of candidates for town or village office under s. 8.05.

(5) VOTING METHOD; ELECTION RESULTS. (a) The recall primary or election of more than one official may be held on the same day. If more than one official of the same office designation is the subject of a recall petition, there shall be a separate election contest for the position held by each official. Candidates shall designate which position they are seeking on their nomination papers. Instructions shall appear on the ballot to electors to vote for each position separately.

(b) The official against whom a recall petition has been filed shall continue to perform the duties of his or her office until a certificate of election is issued to his or her successor. The person receiving a plurality of votes at the recall election or a majority of votes at a primary when authorized under sub. (3) (d) or (4) (f) shall be declared elected for the remainder of the term. If the incumbent receives the required number of votes he or she shall continue in office. Except as provided in sub. (4) (f), if another person receives the required number of votes that person shall succeed the incumbent if he or she qualifies within 10 days after receiving a certificate of election.

(6) LIMITATION ON RECALL ELECTIONS. After one recall petition and recall election, no further recall petition may be filed against the same official during the term for which he or she was elected.

(7) PURPOSE. The purpose of this section is to facilitate the operation of article XIII, section 12, of the constitution and to extend the same rights to voters of cities, villages, towns, town sanitary districts, and school districts.


This section implements legislative powers reserved by the people. Subject to certain conditions, a common council has no authority to make an initial judgment of the constitutionality or validity of proposed direct legislation. State ex rel. Althouse v. Madison, 79 Wis. 2d 97, 255 N.W.2d 449 (1977).

A proposal that is administrative, rather than legislative in character, is not the proper subject of initiative proceedings. State ex rel. Becker v. City of Milwaukee Common Council, 101 Wis. 2d 680, 305 N.W.2d 178 (Ct. App. 1981).

A city clerk has a mandatory duty to forward the common council a sufficient petition and ordinance in proper form. State ex rel. North v. Goetz, 116 Wis. 2d 239, 344 N.W.2d 747 (Ct. App. 1983).

The power of initiative does not extend to legislative decisions that have already been made by the legislative body. Schafer v. Potosi Village Board, 177 Wis. 2d 287, 501 N.W.2d 901 (Ct. App. 1993).

If statutes establish procedures for the accomplishment of legislation in a certain area, an initiative may not effect legislation that would modify the statutory directives of the statute, or that would bind a municipality if it were legislating in the same area. Section 62.23 establishes such procedures for zoning; zoning may not be legislated or modified by initiative. An initiative constituting a pervasive regulation of, or prohibition on, the use of land is zoning. Hetman v. City of Mauston, 226 Wis. 2d 543, 595 N.W.2d 450 (Cl. App. 1999), 98−3133.

There are 4 exceptions to the sub. (4) requirement that requested direct legislation be either passed or submitted to the electorate: 1) when the proposed direct legislation involves executive or administrative matters, rather than legislative ones; 2) when it compels the repeal of an existing ordinance, or compels the passage of an ordinance in conflict with existing ordinances; 3) when it seeks to exercise legislative powers not conferred on a municipality; and 4) when it would modify statutory pre−scribed directives that would bind a municipality if it were attempting to legislate in the same area. Mount Horeb Community Alert v. Village Board of Mt. Horeb, 2002 WI App 80, 252 Wis. 2d 713, 643 N.W.2d 186, 01−2217.

Mandamus is the appropriate action when a city council refuses either option of sub. (1). Mount Horeb Community Alert v. Village Board of Mt. Horeb, 2002 WI App 80, 252 Wis. 2d 713, 643 N.W.2d 186, 01−2217.

A proposed ordinance, initiated by a group of citizens, to require a village to hold a binding referendum prior to the start of construction on any new village building project requiring a capital expenditure of $1 million or more was an appropriate subject of direct legislation. Mount Horeb Community Alert v. Village Board of Mt. Horeb, 2003 WI App 100, 263 Wis. 2d 229, 655 N.W.2d 154.

Section 893.80 (1) (b), which requires the filing of a notice of claim before an action may be commenced against a municipality, did not apply to an action for mandamus seeking to compel a city council to comply with this section. Oak Creek Citizen’s Action Committee v. City of Oak Creek, 2007 WI App 196, 304 Wis. 2d 702; 731 N.W.2d 668, 01−2264,

A “concealment statement” under sub. (6), properly construed, means a brief statement of the general purpose of the proposed ordinance. It is not required that the ballot must contain every essential element of the proposed ordinance. Metropolitan Mil−
When an ordinance was never implemented because an injunction was issued and 2 years passed before the injunction was vacated, the 2-year time period excluded the time between the issuance of an injunction and its vacation. In that circumstance, returning the parties to the position they were in as of the date on which the temporary injunction is the only reasonable construction of sub. (8). Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, Inc. v. City of Milwaukee, 2011 WI App 45, 332 Wis. 2d 459, 798 N.W.2d 287, 09–1874.