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Re-Booting Accessibility Compliance

Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

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AccessElections!

Wisconsin Government Accountability Accessibility Compliance Program **Re-Bootng Accessibility Compliance**

Federal and Wisconsin State laws require that all voters, regardless of disability, be able to cast a ballot both privately and independently. The State of Wisconsin, through the Government Accountability Board (Board), has taken this requirement to heart. Through its *AccessElections!* Initiative, an online computerized automated dynamic integrated system is resulting in the statewide assessments of polling places being performed with significantly increased efficiency and effectiveness that is improving and leveling the “playing field” for all of Wisconsin’s voters, especially those with disabilities.

Background

- 3.2 Million Wisconsin active registered voters
- 1,851 Municipalities (cities, towns and villages) / Municipal Clerks
- 72 County Clerks
- 2,678 Polling Places (as of the April 3, 2012 Spring Election/Presidential Preference)

In 2008, the Board launched its *AccessElections!* Accessibility Compliance Program Initiative as the centerpiece of its effort to ensure that voters with disabilities have equal access to polling places (See Attachment 1). In conjunction with an Accessibility Advisory Group comprised of disability experts and advocates, Board staff developed a 27-page survey instrument designed to assess polling place compliance with Federal and State accessibility standards. The survey was field pretested in 2008 and deployed for use in 2009.

While the paper survey was used to conduct Accessibility Audits from 2009 through April 2012, by mid-2010 a process for converting the paper survey into a computerized database was the beginning of what would become a fully integrated online automated process. In 2011, in order to conduct a larger number of Accessibility Audits, the Board augmented its auditing effort by procuring temporary staff services to expand the capacity of regular staff. Regular staff and temporary auditors received intensive training that focused on the concept and need for Accessibility, the specific requirements of Federal and State law and policy of the G.A.B., the survey instrument, and the proper and correct use of the measuring tools required to assess polling place Accessibility.

The Accessibility Auditors fanned out across the state during the regularly scheduled, recall, and special elections that took place during the year in order to carefully determine compliance (See Attachment 2). Since 2012, the Board has relied solely on temporary employees to conduct Accessibility Audits. This action allows regular staff to remain in the office and perform their normal duties on Election Day and has also given the Board added flexibility to field as many auditors as are needed to meet its goals. During 2011 and the first quarter of 2012, auditors averaged nine (9) polling places per person per election.

Technological Upgrades

In the second quarter of 2012, the *AccessElections!* computerized database was completed and the Board’s 27-page Accessibility Survey was migrated onto an online platform (See Attachment 3). The database was transferred to computer tablets that were used for the first time to record the accessibility audit information and findings. In addition to the survey instrument and the *AccessElections!* database,

the tablets feature GPS route mapping and digital photo capabilities. The training of Accessibility auditors was expanded to two-and-a-half days to ensure they are able to take full advantage of this new technology. In addition, field work at a mock Polling Place, set-up in collaboration with the City of Madison City Clerk, has added a realistic element to the training process. These improvements increased production markedly; auditors went from averaging nine (9) polling places to twelve (12) polling places per person per election. Given this production rate, the Board anticipates being able to conduct an initial audit of all of the state's polling places within the next three years.

This strategic step has numerous advantages, including the following:

- The computerized survey is significantly more efficient.
- The auditor need only focus on the sections of the survey that are specific to a particular polling place.
- The online platform eliminates the need for deciphering hand-print or hand-writing.
- The automated process eliminates the need for data-entry of the audited information; thereby reducing costs.
- The audited information is imported into, and automatically populates the ***AccessElections!*** Accessibility database.
- Additional functionality of the tablets adds value to the site visits, providing accurate directions on-demand and the ability to document conditions by photographs or video.

Strategic Upgrades

The Board is already expanding the functionality and utility of ***AccessElections!*** These improvements include upgrading and refining the training program; upgrading and refining the survey instrument and online platform; and, automating the audit reporting and administrative follow-up response time to the audited local election officials and the respective Chief Executives of the audited municipalities.

Following each election, Board staff performs a thorough debriefing of Auditors, as well as an internal analysis of audit procedures during which time best practices are identified as well as patterns and trends of non-compliance, and areas of needed improvement that were observed and documented by Auditors. In addition, during the debriefing session, the audit process, the survey instrument, and online platform and related issues are discussed. The debriefing process is dynamic and ongoing.

Functionalities are being finalized for automating the process of reporting audit findings to local election officials to permit the electronic submission of their plans of action in a way that is keyed to the findings of the Audit. Currently, reports are manually generated and require hours of painstaking work. Automated reporting will eliminate this requirement and thus accelerate the process and permit Board staff to concentrate on substantive accessibility problems rather than the generation of paperwork.

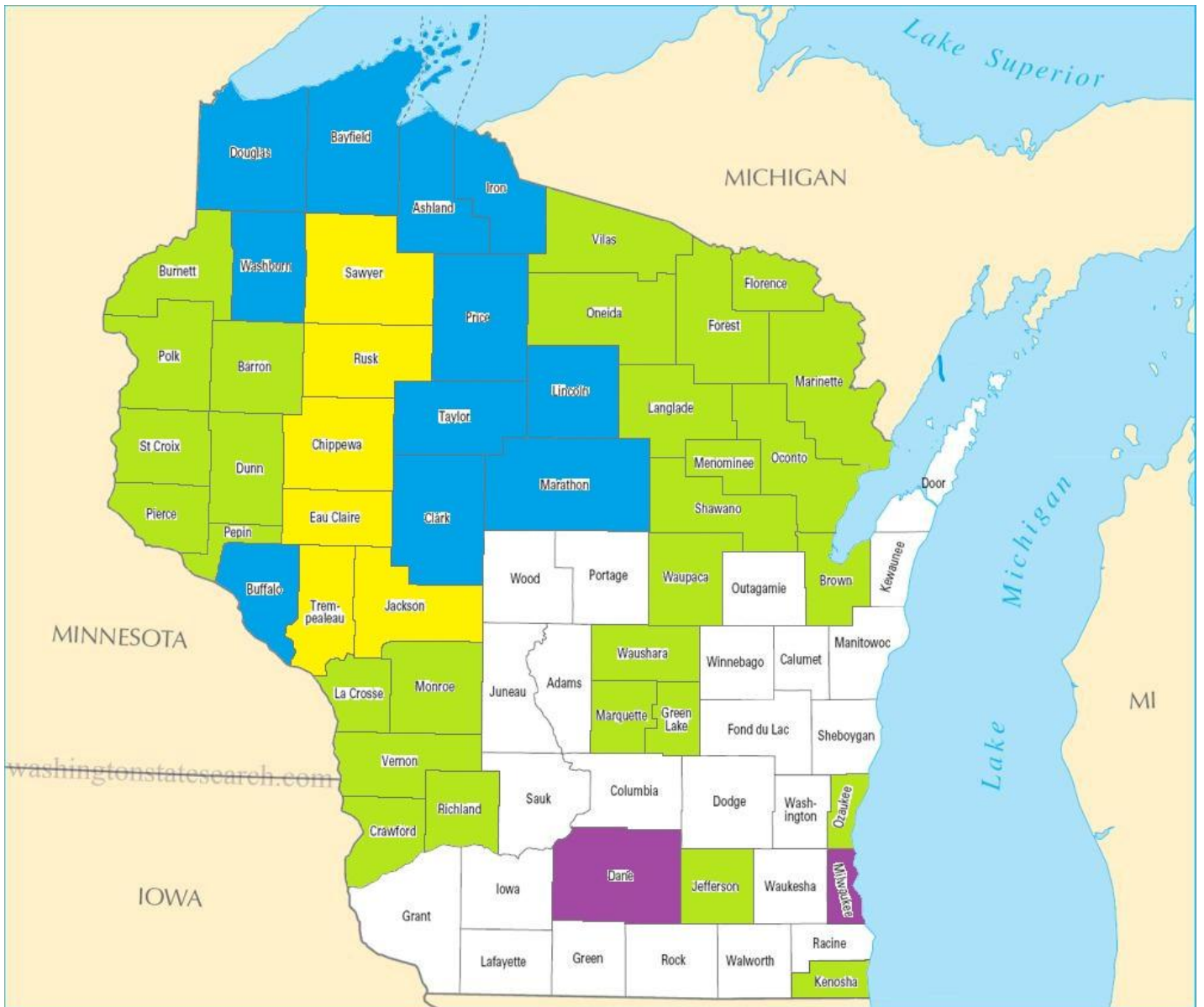
Further, during the course of a busy election year, thousands of pages of paper will be saved. Allowing municipal clerks to submit their plans of action in response to the audit findings through ***AccessElections!*** will make it easier for clerks to submit a more timely response, as well as allowing Board staff and local election officials identify and remove barriers significantly faster; thereby, ensuring electors with disabilities to mark and cast ballots privately and independently.

Summary

The careful implementation and judicious use of technological advancements is allowing the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board to streamline its ***AccessElections!*** Accessibility Compliance Program with marked and continuing improvements in efficiency. The Board is able to do more with less, and able work more quickly to resolve accessibility problems throughout the State of Wisconsin and at a reduced cost to the taxpayer.



Audited Counties



Blue – May 8, 2012
Yellow – April 3, 2012
Purple – February 21, 2012
Green – Year 2011

- Admin
- Survey Templates
 - Random Visits
 - Activity Log
 - Survey History
 - Voting System Security
 - Manage Supplies
 - G.A.B. Resource Support

Polling Places

Survey

Comments (0)

Photos (0)

MUNICIPALITY: TOWN OF COUDERAY

POLLING PLACE: COUDERAY TOWN HALL

HINDI: 58004

SURVEY SETUP

Polling Place

NOTE: You must complete a separate survey for each polling place within a municipality. You are responding to the following polling place Accessibility Survey

Polling Place Name	COUDERAY TOWN HALL
Address	4452 N HOFFER RD COUDERAY, 548287179
Municipality	TOWN OF COUDERAY
County	SAWYER COUNTY

ZONE 1 - PARKING

Check all that apply, and complete the corresponding subsections.

☒ Parking Lot/Off-Street Parking

☐ Drop-off Zone(specifically designated with signage)

☐ On-street parking (main entrance or accessible entrance only)

ZONE 2 - PATHWAYS

Check all that apply, and complete the corresponding subsections.

☒ The accessible pathway is not interrupted by any curbs or steps on the way to the building.

An Example of the Electronic Survey