

**League of Women Voters of Wisconsin**  
**Election Observation Program**  
**Executive Summary – Election November 8, 2016**  
January 6, 2017

## **HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FINAL REPORT**

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin (LWVWI or The League) assigned 249 volunteer election observers to 511 polling sites across Wisconsin for the November 8, 2016 election. The League has issued an election observation report based on the 416 polling place reports returned by observers. Following are key findings from the project:

### **Signage and Polling Site Organization**

- Site organization and signage continues to be a problem for lack of visibility, poor layout, and wrong information, such as not updating signs with the residence requirement change from 28 days to 10 days. These problems led to voter confusion and frustration. Some observers noted voters leaving and not voting or that the voters were at the wrong polling site.
- Observers witnessed more than 600 voters at 230 sites who were told to go to another polling location. Observers noted that the best practices for assisting voters who were at the wrong polling location were to have a dedicated staff member, a ward map displayed on a wall, or a tablet available to find the voter's polling site by using [myvote.wi.org](http://myvote.wi.org). Unfortunately, observers also noted a few sites that did nothing to assist these voters.
- Observers noted that having Internet access on site is helpful. Also having a greeter to assist voters immediately upon arrival is essential to overcoming voter confusion, layout problems, and restrictions due to the physical configurations of the spaces.

### **Polling Site Management and Staff**

- Overall, observers found the majority of sites to be staffed by officials who were professional, helpful, and respectful of voters.
- The problems that were noted included lack of knowledge about: types of acceptable proof of residence documents, how to administer provisional ballots, and the use of electronic devices to show acceptable documents.
- Understaffing is a root cause that leads to other problems in the polling sites such as long lines, lack of assistance, greater voter confusion and frustration, and misapplication of laws by staff.

### **Voter Registration**

- Observers witnessed nearly 500 people turned away from registration in the Fall General Election for lack of proper documents. Most citizens could produce some

type of documents with an address, but not acceptable documents. Observers noted that after election officials assisted, some voters were able to produce correct documents either on the spot but most times the voter had to leave and, hopefully, would come back. Others simply did not have any of the acceptable documents and could not vote.

- Over 200 sites had 465 voters who were not listed in the poll books who claimed they previously voted at that location and some as recently as April. Election Day registration proved to be a valuable safeguard that allowed these individuals to register at their polling place on Election Day and cast their ballot.

### **Acceptable Photo ID for Voting**

- Observers noted 71 voters who were unable to produce an acceptable ID and opted to cast a provisional ballot. Observers also noted that 37 other voters were offered a provisional ballot and refused. These citizens said they would not be able to obtain the necessary ID or get to their clerk's office by the Friday following the election. In 23 other instances, a provisional ballot should have been offered but was not.
- The application of the photo ID law is not uniformly applied across the state. Some sites allowed people to use IDs that were not on the acceptable ID list. Other sites did not ask for ID from all voters. Other sites were incorrectly checking that the address on the ID matches the current address of the voter when the ID was used for voting.

### **CONCLUSION**

There is a significant need for both voter education and training of election officials as to what constitutes acceptable proof of residence for voter registration and photo ID for voting and when to administer provisional ballots. The laws at least cause confusion, and at worst are misapplied by election officials and prevent eligible citizens from voting. The full report contains specific examples of such problems and concludes with recommendations for improvement, including some legislative remedies. What this report cannot quantify is the number of voters who may have found the requirements for registration or photo ID confusing or impossible to comply with and therefore never even attempted to vote.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Improve Election Official Training
- Develop and Train Local Election Officials in Statewide Standards for Polling Site Management
- Increase and Target Voter Education
- Increase Options for Complying with the Proof-of-Residence (POR) and Voter Photo ID Requirements

Read the full report [here](#).