



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN EDUCATION FUND

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GREATER INVESTMENT NEEDED TO IMPROVE ELECTIONS

The League of Women Voters is proud of Wisconsin's long tradition of open and fair elections, as well as of our relatively high turnout of voters compared to other states. We have no doubt the two are related. That said, we know the system has never been perfect and there have always been errors and, yes, some rare and isolated instances of illegal voting. It is good that the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) has scrutinized the election process and identified areas where we need to continue to strive for improvement.

Particularly disturbing are the findings in the LAB report released last week that people with disabilities had significant difficulties exercising their right to vote and that 1,537 citizens were incorrectly classified as ineligible to vote because the matching lists were not up-to-date. Also, we need to improve our system for verifying addresses to be sure people are voting at the correct polling place.

The League of Women Voters is working with state and local election officials and others to encourage municipalities to conduct voluntary audits following the spring election. This is a way to identify any common or recurring problems so they can be fixed in time for the fall elections when a record turnout is expected.

These improvements will require a greater investment in our election system, but it is an investment worth making. At a recent national conference on post-election audits, one election official noted that it costs upwards of \$3.30 per vote cast to run an election. She estimated that an audit typically costs 8 cents per vote cast.

There is a staff of 11 at the State Elections Board, and many of the 1,851 municipal clerks – who really administer the elections – are part-time employees. Even if they're full-time and have staff support, running elections is only a part of the clerk's job. Our election officials and poll workers do a remarkable job, and Wisconsin is blessed to have a long-standing tradition of free and fair elections. It is essential that Wisconsin expend the efforts and dollars to improve and support the Statewide Voter Registration System because it is a key tool in the fight against illegal voting.

The League of Women Voters of the United States has identified four steps for improving the election system:

- Professionalize election management with uniform standards, training to the standards, and accountability.
- Adopt a "service" focus that places the voter at the center of the election system. The voting process should be convenient, accessible and efficient.
- Establish a wide-ranging research and development effort to improve every aspect of elections and adapt to the ongoing process of change in election management.
- Increase funding to implement these improvements.

We strongly believe that the Congress of the United States should provide substantial, additional, ongoing funding, on top of Wisconsin's investment, to ensure that elections are secure, accurate, recountable and accessible.

Andrea Kaminski, Executive Director