

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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Accountability Board Replies to Attorney General's Lawsuit

MADISON, WI – *In response to a lawsuit filed Wednesday against the Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.), G.A.B. Director and General Counsel Kevin Kennedy issued the following statement:*

“Attorney General Van Hollen has advised the Board that he has filed a lawsuit about a recent decision of the Board concerning the use of a new cross-checking tool developed for its Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS).

“The SVRS has been in place and used effectively for seven statewide elections since 2006. The Board began using the new cross-checking feature in August 2008. At two public meetings in July and August, G.A.B. members considered a request from the Republican Party of Wisconsin to cross-check the data of all Wisconsin voters entered into the SVRS since January 2006.

“The Republican Party asked that all voters whose records did not match Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) records be required to provide proof of residence at the polling place or to vote on a provisional ballot.

“The Attorney General has asked the court to compel the Board to adopt that position. Neither state nor federal law specifies what must be done with information gathered from the cross-checking function.

“The Board heard testimony from a number of individuals, and carefully considered the issues presented. The Board voted to continue its practice of requiring all new voter registration applications entered into the SVRS to be cross-checked against DOT records, but not to require a retroactive cross-check of individuals who had registered and voted in previous elections.

“In its deliberations, the Board was concerned about preliminary data that showed more than a fifth of voters' data mismatched due to variations in names, differing data entry standards, or typographical errors. A check conducted of G.A.B. members' data resulted in four of six Board members' information mismatching.

“The Board is committed to properly protecting the electoral process from potential fraud. At the same time, the Board is equally committed to protecting the right of every eligible person to vote in Wisconsin, and that every valid vote must be counted.

“The Board balanced these two fundamental concerns and concluded that it is in the best interest of the citizens of this state to continue its cross-checking efforts until the entire voter database is as accurate as possible.

“The Board believes it would be counter-productive to rush this effort and to create a significant risk, at best, of unnecessary hardship and confusion at the polls, and at worst, the disenfranchisement of Wisconsin citizens with a clear and legitimate right to vote.”

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The Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) is responsible for administration and enforcement of campaign finance, elections, ethics and lobbying laws in Wisconsin. The G.A.B. is made up of six non-partisan, former judges and is supported by an agency of non-partisan staff members. Additional information about the mission of the G.A.B. may be obtained by telephone at **1-608-266-8005**, by electronic mail at **gab@wi.gov**, or through the Internet at **<http://gab.wi.gov>**.