

County Clerk

Sandra Frion

711 N. Bridge Street, Room 109
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
Phone 715.726.7985
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CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Est. 1848



WISCONSIN

Deputy Clerks

Amanda Richardson

715.726.7980

Lisa Merrell

715.726.7982

January 13, 2015

Transmitted via email only

Honorable Robert Cowles
State Senator – Senate District 2
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
Sen.Cowles@legis.wi.gov

Honorable Samantha Kerkman
State Representative – Assembly District 61
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708
Rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov

Dear Senator Cowles and Representative Kerkman:

As I am not able to attend the Joint Legislative Audit Committee public hearing being held tomorrow, I would like to take this opportunity to give you feedback with my written testimony of my support for the GAB and services they provide.

I started my career as Chippewa County Clerk in 2011, two weeks prior to the Supreme Court recount that took place that year. Being new to the role of clerk, I was not even sure on the process of elections, much less the recount process. During this time period, I was granted the opportunity to reach out to the GAB for their expertise and continue to do so to this day with election administration.

With continued legislative changes, the Government Accountability Board has proven to be an excellent resource for managing the election administration process. They have been challenged with staying abreast of the continual law changes and providing clerks with the most up-to-date tools to assist them in running a successful election. The GAB has taken on a large role in providing guidance, training, education, procedure manuals, continual reminders and forms to keep the clerks informed. Election administration is a major part of the County Clerks and Municipal Clerk's offices and we consider the GAB as part of the team and work together.

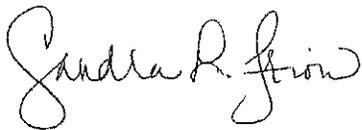
Changes implemented by the GAB in recent years due to continual election law modifications have put the scrutiny of election administration at a very high standard. Allowing the GAB oversight of the electoral process is a benefit to all involved.

I would like to ask the question, "Why did the Legislature create the GAB in the first place?"; to allow elections in the State of Wisconsin to be conducted in a fair and non-partisan manner. Reverting back to a Board which is governed by partisan political appointees is not the solution. As for the exception report given by the Legislative Audit Bureau, well, I take these as recommendations for improvement. These exceptions simply lay out an opportunity to improve processes and procedures, which is needed in any successful organization.

The ultimate goal is to make sure that the electoral process in the State of Wisconsin is conducted in a fair manner, with integrity and transparency, and to allow the voice of the people to be heard. It is critical to ensure to the voters that "their" vote counts. On behalf of my role as County Clerk, and as a voter in the State of Wisconsin, I would ask that you take into consideration all testimony that is given, verbal and written, and reflect on the needs that would allow the GAB to continue to do their job in the current form. Honestly, I am not sure that elections would be as successful as they are if it weren't for the GAB's continual assistance and guidance.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra L. Frion". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a long, sweeping tail.

Sandra L. Frion
Chippewa County Clerk

KAREN J. GIBSON
Dodge County Clerk
kgibson@co.dodge.wi.us



BONNIE E. BUDDE
Chief Deputy
bbudde@co.dodge.wi.us

Administration Building
127 East Oak Street, Juneau WI 53039
920-386-3605 / Fax: 920-386-4292

CHRISTINE M. KJORNES
Deputy
ckjornes@co.dodge.wi.us

January 12, 2015

The Honorable Robert Cowles
State Senator
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

The Honorable Samantha Kerkman
State Representative
PO Box 8952
Madison WI 53708

Dear Senator Cowles and Representative Kerkman:

I am writing today in reference to the audit of the Government Accountability Board (GAB) as I am unable to attend the public hearing scheduled for Wednesday, January 14, 2015.

I have found the assistance provided by GAB to be invaluable. Their Election Administration and Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) Webinar training sessions have been excellent. They have used technology to improve communications via their website and email system, and the checklists they provide for use with SVRS are very detailed and thorough. GAB has also provided very detailed Election Day and Election Administration Manuals that cover a majority of election topics. Everyone involved in the election process has had to deal with many changes mid election and the Government Accountability Board has handled those changes successfully.

I would like to go on record in support of the Government Accountability Board and its current structure.

Sincerely,

Karen J. Gibson
Dodge County Clerk

COUNTY OF GRANT

OFFICE OF COUNTY CLERK

Linda K. Gebhard, Clerk
Karla K. Schwantes, Deputy

lgebhard@co.grant.wi.gov



111 S. Jefferson Street
PO Box 529
Lancaster, WI 53813

Phone: 608-723-2675
Fax: 608-723-4048

CountyClerk@co.grant.wi.gov

January 13, 2015

Dear Senator Cowles and Representative Kerkman:

I know the Wisconsin County Clerks Association (WCCA) is sending a correspondence to you representing the support of the County Clerk's in Wisconsin for the Government Accountability Board. In addition to that, I am sending this letter to both of you to state my individual support for the Government Accountability Board.

I have worked in the Grant County Clerk's Office for 18 years, 12 years as the Deputy County Clerk and the last 6 years as the County Clerk. I was on board at the beginning when the Government Accountability Board was developing the SVRS Election Program for the State of Wisconsin. The County Clerk Offices and the Government Accountability Board has worked as a team through this process. The Government Accountability Board has always accepted input from the County Clerk's; G.A.B strives to continually improve the election process and have worked countless hours to sustain Voter integrity in the Wisconsin Election Process for the State.

I have nothing but praise for the Government Accountability Board and their staff and would hate to lose this resource of knowledge, continued training and guidance the Government Accountability Board supplies to me as a County Clerk during the Election process for the State of Wisconsin.

Respectfully Submitted,



Linda K. Gebhard
Grant County Clerk

Jackson County



OFFICE OF COUNTY CLERK
307 MAIN STREET
BLACK RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN 54615

Kyle Deno, County Clerk
Phone (715) 284-0268
Fax (715) 284-0278
E-mail: kyle.deno@co.jackson.wi.us
Mary K Johnson, Deputy County Clerk
Cindy Culpitt, County Bookkeeper

January 12, 2015

The Honorable Robert Cowles
State Senator
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

The Honorable Samantha Kerkman
State Representative
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

To the Honorable Senator Cowles and Representative Kerkman,

I am writing in support of the Governmental Accountability Board staff as I am not able to attend the upcoming hearings regarding the GAB Audit.

I have been the Jackson County Clerk for the past 16 years and have the highest respect for staff at the GAB. I have always had an excellent working relationship with the staff and can count on each and every one of them for the needed support in running our elections in Jackson County.

The GAB staff are normally scheduled at our Wisconsin County Clerk's summer conference to update the clerk's on legislative changes that have or will occurred. The GAB staff are always supportive of the legislature and the law changes that are occurring. They GAB staff have always remain non-partisan in any interaction that I have had with them and I certainly appreciate that fact as we carry out the laws of this great state!

Sincerely,

Kyle Deno,
Jackson County Clerk, A.C.



JUNEAU COUNTY CLERK

220 E. State Street
Mauston, WI 53948

Phone: (608) 847-9300
Fax: (608) 847-9402

Kathleen Kobylski - County Clerk
Carol Fischer - Deputy County Clerk

January 9, 2015

The Honorable Robert Cowles
State Senator
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
Sen.Cowles@legis.wi.gov

The Honorable Samantha Kerkman
State Representative
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708
Rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov

The Honorable Robert Cowles and the Honorable Samantha Kerkman:

I am writing in reference to the hearing by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee to be held on January 14th regarding restructure of the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board (GAB).

I feel strongly in support of the current structure of the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board. The GAB has an excellent working relationship with the local election officials, they show expertise, provide immediate assistance and instruction when contacted regarding any aspect of the election process.

The GAB continues to improve operations and communicate effectively with local officials regardless of demands placed against the department.

I would like to go on record supporting the current GAB, knowing they will continue to identify and develop to further improve operations.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Kobylski
Juneau County Clerk



Nan Kottke, Marathon County Clerk

Marathon County Courthouse
500 Forest Street
Wausau, WI 54403
715.261.1500 (Telephone)
715.261.1515 (Fax)
Nan.Kottke@co.marathon.wi.us



January 12, 2015

The Honorable Robert Cowles
State Senator - Senate District 2
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
Sen.Cowles@legis.wi.gov

The Honorable Samantha Kerkman
State Representative – Assembly District 61
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708
Rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov

The Honorable Senator Cowles and Representative Kerkman:

I am unable to attend the Joint Legislative Audit Committee Public Hearing being held Wednesday, January 14, 2015 regarding the audit report of the Government Accountability Board (GAB). I would like to enter my letter of strong support of the current structure of the GAB.

My tenure of 43 years in the Marathon County Clerk's Office, with the last 18 years as County Clerk, do not have a problem working with the current structure of the GAB and would hate to see anything drastic happen. Election administration is a major part of the County Clerk's Office and considers the GAB part of that support team. The GAB provides immediate assistance and support when needed and called upon. Numerous Municipal Clerks in Marathon County stated their satisfaction on the continuous training made available through webinars conducted by the GAB staff, with the manuals available and continually kept current on their website, along with Election Day support.

If something is broken or needs to be improved it should be, but I do not believe that the structure of the GAB is broken. The GAB is continuously striving to improve or implement changes smoothly. We, Director Kennedy and his staff, the 72 County Clerks, 1852 Municipal Clerks and all the Election Inspectors know that the past couple years with nonstop elections, including recounts, have been to say the least, hectic and emotionally draining, but we look back and as a "team" we made it through and will continue. The GAB, with their guidance and support, was the glue that held us together.

In closing, Director and General Counsel Kennedy and his staff continue to communicate effectively, share their knowledge and expertise, and continually strive to improve the election processes making sure elections are run efficiently, with integrity and transparency. The main objective or goal being ensuring every elector knows "their" vote counted.

I would be in favor in using the audit findings in helping the GAB be even better.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Nan Kottke
Marathon County Clerk

cc: Judge Thomas H. Barland, Chairperson, GAB
Kevin J. Kennedy, Director and General Counsel, GAB

OFFICE OF
POLK COUNTY CLERK

CAROLE T. WONDRA

100 POLK COUNTY PLAZA, SUITE 110
BALSAM LAKE, WISCONSIN 54810
(715) 485-9226 FAX (715) 485-9104
E-mail Address: carole.wondra@co.polk.wi.us.

January 9, 2015

The Honorable Robert Cowles,

I would like to first thank you for the opportunity to address the issue of the recent audit of the Government Accountability Board. I am only a lowly County Clerk in the middle of my second term in office. One of the largest responsibilities I have as the County Clerk is election administration. For that I rely on the GAB.

The guidance, training and supervision provided by the Government Accountability Board are immeasurable. We all know that they have had to live within the same financial constraints as we have over the years. What I can tell you about the GAB is that they are well trained and professional. They give us the tools we need to administer some of the best run elections in the nation. That is not by accident.

As you consider the future of the GAB, please remember that there are many of us out there that depend on them. We appreciate them and the job they do. In return they have made us better clerks and allowed us to be a part of something much bigger. I consider it an honor to work with the GAB.

Sincerely,

Carole T. Wondra
Polk County Clerk

OFFICE OF
POLK COUNTY CLERK

CAROLE T. WONDRA

100 POLK COUNTY PLAZA, SUITE 110
BALSAM LAKE, WISCONSIN 54810
(715) 485-9226 FAX (715) 485-9104
E-mail Address: carole.wondra@co.polk.wi.us.

January 9, 2015

The Honorable Samantha Kerkman,

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As you consider the future of the GAB, please remember that there are many of us out there that depend on them. We appreciate them and the job they do. In return they have made us better clerks and allowed us to be a part of something much bigger. I consider it an honor to work with the GAB.

Sincerely,

Carole T. Wondra
Polk County Clerk

From: Simonis, Shirley
Sent: Monday, January 12, 2015 3:23 PM
To: 'Sen.Cowles@legis.wi.gov'; 'rep.Kerkman@legis.wi.gov'
Subject: GAB Audit

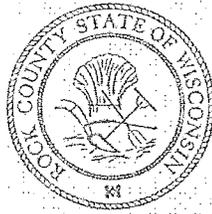
Dear Senator and Representative Kerman,
I just want you to know that GAB has offered continued support and help to Portage County and my staff since I have been Deputy County Clerk for 31 years and currently County Clerk for the past 7 years.
Thank you

SHIRLEY M. SIMONIS
PORTAGE COUNTY CLERK
1516 Church Street
Stevens Point WI 54481
715-346-1351

ROCK COUNTY, WISCONSIN

Office of the Rock County Clerk
51 South Main Street
Janesville, WI 53545

Lori Stottler, Rock County Clerk
Lisa Mianecki, Deputy
David Babcock, Clerk Specialist



Office (608) 757-5660
Fax (608) 757-5662
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stottler@co.rock.wi.us

January 12, 2015

To the Joint Legislative Audit Committee Members: Senators Cowles, Lazich, Darling, Vinehout, Lehman and Assembly Representatives Kerkman, Marklein, Nygren, Richards, and Sargent.

Good Morning! Thank you for the opportunity to share with you testimony about my experience with the Government Accountability Board as it relates to your recent agency audit.

My relationship with the GAB is mostly reflected at the election administration level, although it sometimes spills into campaign finance, complaints and even lobbying activity. I have been the Rock County Clerk since 2007. Ironically, I came on board when I didn't know better of the new life the GAB was taking on from the State Elections Board. In my 7+ years, I've served as a Train the Trainer, sat on various clerk committees and am currently a member of the WI-EAC that reviews and makes recommendations on qualified election systems. I also hold a CERA certification from the Election Center out of Houston, TX where I often hear feedback of a positive nature regarding Wisconsin's non-partisan GAB construction.

The staff members of the GAB have always been professional and eager to assist me, something I can't say about other partner agencies I engage with and depend on for performing my daily duties. I have personally taken advantage of many of their training opportunities (although not required) and am entirely grateful for their voluntary attendance and engagement at every semi-annual conference of my Wisconsin County Clerks Association. The GAB staff works hard to keep us informed of pending election legislation and other potential impacts on our work. They have advocated on our behalf when equipment vendors and open records requests for election code was challenged. They are helpful and inclusive on matters important to us as clerks.

The most valuable tool created from the GAB in Elections is the Statewide Voter Registration System. Prior to 2007, each municipality kept record of their own voter list. Running cross-checks to determine if voter fraud was occurring was nearly impossible and voter trust was nonexistent. This SVRS system isn't perfect but it's a step in the right direction to eliminating fraud and managing all active and inactive voter registrations. It also takes clerk commitment: SVRS is a database that can provide robust amounts of accurate voter information and when good data goes in, can be a powerhouse used to protect all voters in Wisconsin. Garbage in – Garbage out cannot be blamed on the GAB if clerks across the state aren't taking great pride in the data being entered. This cannot be done at the hands of the GAB staff alone and requires the commitment and accuracy of thousands of invested clerks!

I really hope that we will be able to one day soon store the voter's actual GAB-131 registration as a pdf in the voter record itself – or at the very least upload the signature portion for comparison that the poll list signature when concerned about signature and voter fraud. I also am hopeful that the state (mostly because it's federally funded at the state level and not reimbursed locally) will permanently take on the role of mailing system generated letters to the voters relating to incomplete registrations or inactive voter termination.

One other very robust tool that has evolved is the www.myvote.wi.gov website. What a blessing to voters, especially the military voter. I highly encourage through Press Release and public education that voters take advantage of this tool at every opportunity! Voters can see their sample ballot, get contact information of their elected officials, request an absentee ballot and so much more. This puts the data in the voters hands and allows our hands to do less hand-holding!

On a completely objective level, I too share your concerns about non-compliance from clerks and others as defined in your audit. When the GAB is constantly seeking to get 'voluntary' compliance from clerks for training, or reporting election costs, etc., this is unnecessary staff time wasted that could be used to updating administrative regulations and forms and web documents. It's frustrating to see how much time and effort is spent *forcing voluntary compliance* of municipal clerks for data that results in the rest of us suffering the consequence of items that get behind.

I have repeatedly complained to the GAB executives (as well as lawmakers), that laws and rules without consequence are empty and an un-enforceable waste of time (a speed limit without consequence). On the flip side, ~~if~~ the GAB applied a hammer to non-compliance, they risk damaging a partnership/relationship that could impact future interactions. This is a rock and a hard place.

A couple of concerns about the audit that I hope don't come to fruition are:

1 - One is that this audit has an underlying theme that seeks to eliminate Same Day Voter Registration via its findings.

And, 2 - I hope that the recommendations as a result of the audit doesn't result in the creation of more clerk responsibilities without clerk input and state funding to comply with such responsibility.

In closing, I draw these conclusions from this audit:

- The Audit suggest "adding" responsibility to the GAB, which in my opinion, is not reflective of an agency that should be distrusted, disbanded or overhauled – rather it shows the agency has a bright future in Wisconsin and will continue to be a model for other agencies.
- The Audit makes multiple recommendations regarding promulgating administrative rules in election administration matters. I agree with those recommendations wholeheartedly. However, every time I check in with my own staff about their workload, I ask, "what's going well?" – "what's not going so well?" – "do you have the tools and resources to get the job done?" It appears to me that the additional issues of the past couple of years have sidetracked the GAB and a focus on getting the tools and resources in place to timely

complete these tasks is not just a charge of the GAB, but of the State as well. FTE Project positions can create uncertainty and lack of stability. There is a hefty learning curve in this agency and conditionally hiring staff on limited terms may create more problems than if there were more permanent members of the staff to stay abreast of an ever changing environment. I hope you'll consider the expertise, tools and resources necessary to execute with accuracy and efficiency the duties charged in this office.

Clerks play a vital role in election administration. As a partisan elected constitutional office, I trust the GAB as a partner in my work...even when audits such as these reflect flaws more than assets. I look forward to watching the GAB move Wisconsin FORWARD in elections, campaign finance, lobbying and ethics in 2015 and beyond!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lori Stottler". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Lori Stottler
Rock County Clerk, CERA, CPM



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY CLERK

Jon Dolson
County Clerk

Jon

rcd 1.14.2015
in hearing

January 14, 2015

Joint Legislative Audit Committee
Senator Robert Cowles-Senate Chair
Representative Samantha Kerkman-Assembly Chair

Good morning Committee Chairs and Members,

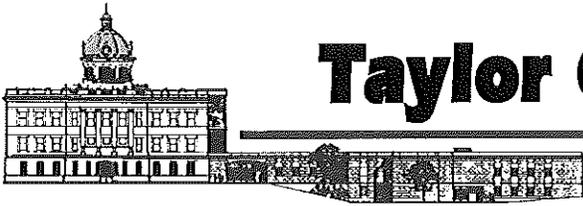
The Legislative Audit Bureau's (L.A.B.) year-long comprehensive review of the non-partisan Government Accountability Board (G.A.B.) was a wise investment of tax-payer dollars to help find ways to improve government. The sole existence of the L.A.B. is to assist the legislature in "maintaining effective oversight of state operations." I would trust that they are used extensively throughout the state government. It seems that using more tools like this would allow people to trust their government a bit more in these days where often it's the opposite.

In addition to having the L.A.B.'s recommendations for improvement before you, please take some time to review what the G.A.B. themselves achieved, within that same year period, to improve and build on their foundation. Increased opportunities for general training and guidance, to polling place accessibility compliance, to customized training with the on-line canvass system, are just a sample of their dozens of accomplishments.

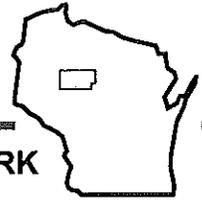
To further improve elections, the G.A.B. also continually builds relationships far away from the capitol, with the municipal and county clerks. They often state that they are a partner of local election officials. This is absolutely the truth. And there couldn't be more comforting words with myself just finishing only my second year in office. I rely on this important partnership monthly, often weekly, and sometimes daily, and I look forward to getting to know even more than the dozen or so staff that already know my name. Fortunately they seem to never tire of hearing my voice, their answers to questions, suggestions on where to find more answers and guidance in finding solutions are always concise and in a timely manner. They are an invaluable resource.

In the future, I envision continuing to build upon the great working relationship with the G.A.B. staff, my election partners, so we can continue to improve elections for not only the residents of Sheboygan County, but the entire state. Isn't that what's important? Receiving assistance from your end will ensure just that. I hope you will consider implementing the L.A.B.'s recommendations to improve the non-partisan G.A.B. and prove their audit efforts were not a waste of their valuable time and resources. There are but a handful of recommendations so it should be relatively easy to accomplish. Please allow time for the G.A.B. to tackle items on the list, let the L.A.B. tackle another area of government, and let's all improve and continue to move forward.

Thank you for your time this morning, it is very much appreciated!



Taylor County Clerk



BRUCE P. STRAMA, COUNTY CLERK
715-748-1460

Carol Ziemer, Deputy Clerk
Jacky Peterson, 748-1461
Payroll/Benefits Administrator

Larry Brandl, Accountant 748-1462
Tracy Duerr, Accounting Assistant

January 9, 2015

Dear Senator Cowles and Representative Kerkman:

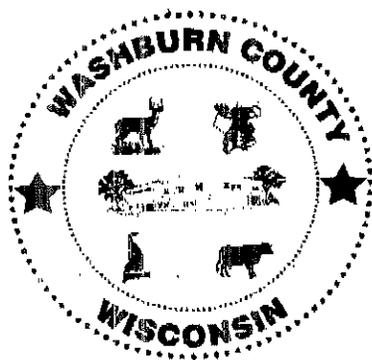
Having worked with the Wisconsin GAB staff since inception, I have been satisfied overall with their actions.

They have been responsive to issues brought forth by the Wisconsin County Clerks and though maybe not always obtaining the outcome we desired I think that they have always been fair in assessment of our concerns and have acted accordingly. Also in their defense, they have been able to; working hand in hand with county and municipal clerks, to obtain positive results even with the influx of new legislation related to elections. In order to obtain those results the training staff should be commended along with staff in general for being available with guidance and support to allow all of us out here on the front lines to address issues as they are presented. The commendable interaction of the current GAB staff with both county and municipal clerks is essential and I feel will continue and result in addition improvements to our election procedures.

In my opinion the outcome of the audit shown no evidence of malicious intent of any sort and though there may be areas that can be improved upon, those improvements should be targeted in the future with the basic structure and funding of the current GAB to remain intact.

Sincerely,

Bruce P. Strama, Taylor County Clerk
President, Wisconsin County Clerks Association



WASHBURN COUNTY CLERK

P.O. Box 639
10 4th Ave.
Shell Lake, Wisconsin 54871
(715) 468-4600 Fax (715) 468-4725
www.co.washburn.wi.us

January 13, 2015

State Senator Robert Cowles
Room 118 South
P.O. Box 7882
Madison WI 53707-7882
FAX: 608-267-0304
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State Representative Samantha Kerkman
Room 315 North
P.O. Box 8952
Madison WI 53708
FAX: 608-282-3661
Rep.Kerkman@legis.wisconsin.gov

Dear Senator Cowles and Representative Kerkman:

I would personally like to go on record in support of the Government Accountability Board (GAB) in reference to the Legislative Audit Bureau's report issued last month. Not only is there support of the GAB with county clerks statewide, but also with municipal clerks. I address this issue not only as the county clerk for Washburn County, but also as the clerk/treasurer for the Town of Gull Lake.

I can't imagine not having the GAB to go to for questions relating to all sorts of election related issues. They are a wealth of knowledge and have the expertise to go along with it. In fact, there is a binder in my office called "Diane Lowe Questions", which my predecessor started; I refer and add to this information often. The educational opportunities alone are extremely important and relevant. We look to them for guidance in the midst of ever-changing election laws and I sincerely appreciate the ability to have a uniform approach to issues – a "united" front as it may be.

The GAB continues to elevate Wisconsin Election Administration to a very high standard and I feel very proud of that fact. This would not have been possible if it were not for the work of each and every one of the GAB members and staff. They have my applause!

Respectfully,

Lolita Olson
Washburn County Clerk
Clerk/Treasurer for Town of Gull Lake
lolson@co.washburn.wi.us