

# Clerks expect turnout on par with 2018 spring election

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Clerks around the state are predicting turnout in today's spring contest will largely be in line with the last election cycle.

That includes turnout in the state's two biggest counties, Dane and Milwaukee, as well as other other areas with contested local races that could help bolster turnout overall.

Dane County Clerk Scott McDonell said he expects overall turnout in Dane County to end up somewhere in the 40 percent range. As of 11 a.m., around 13 percent of registered voters had cast a ballot, which includes some absentee ballots. That's down slightly from the 14 percent who had voted as of 11 a.m. last April, though he said the difference was largely negligible given the difference in registered voters between the two elections.

In all, there's about 45,000 more registered voters this spring election compared with the last spring election, McDonell said, due to a registration "surge from the fall election." Last year, he said, there were around 304,000 registered voters, compared with some 350,000 now.

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McDonell said while the Madison mayoral race will make for "slightly higher" turnout in the city versus outside it, overall he's seeing big similarities to the 2018 spring election in terms of turnout. Turnout in that spring general hit 43.5 percent in the county.

"It looks a lot like last year," he said.

Meanwhile, Milwaukee County Clerk George Christenson said he's hoping to see 29

percent of registered voters turn out this cycle, relatively on par with the approximately 25 percent that voted in last year's spring election.

He also noted an uptick in registered voters this spring compared to last year of around 85,000. He said as of April 1 last year, the county had nearly 444,000 registered voters, but that number is now at almost 530,000.

In Green Bay, which has a contested mayoral race on the ballot, Clerk Kris Teske said turnout at 10 a.m. was at 8 percent of registered voters, a figure that doesn't include absentee ballots.

She added she initially thought this year's open mayoral race — between former Dem Rep. Eric Genrich and Brown County Supv. Patrick Buckley — would make for higher turnout than four years ago when incumbent Mayor Jim Schmitt was running for re-election.

But she now expects turnout will be around 30 percent, the level the city saw in spring 2015.

In conservative Waukesha County, Clerk Meg Wartman declined to weigh in on what overall turnout might look like at the end of the day, though she said it's been "steady."

But she noted a number of municipalities ordered additional ballots earlier this week due to higher in-person absentee voting numbers than anticipated.

"Early voting was strong, and I'm not sure if that's going to trend into same-day voting being strong," she said.

In western Wisconsin, Eau Claire City Clerk Carrie Riepl said she expects 32 percent of registered voters will have cast ballots by the time polls close at 8 p.m. As of 11 a.m., she said, turnout had hit 8 percent, which didn't include absentee ballots.

That 32 percent figure, she said, is in line with last year's election, when around 33 percent of registered voters turned out to vote. But she noted those years were rather high for the city.

This election, Riepl said, local interest in a series of races is likely driving turnout: the race for Eau Claire City Council president as well as five at-large seats on the council.