

Mail-in voting likely to boost turnout in key primaries

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The unique nature of this year's partisan primary—conducted amidst a pandemic with a slew of absentee voters—has complicated things in some of the more competitive races on today's ballot.

Going into today's primary, more than 554,000 absentee ballots had already been returned to clerks with more than 905,00 requested. By comparison, in the August 2016 primary, 645,619 ballots were cast overall, including 101,803 absentee votes.

Among other things, campaigns had to refigure their mail strategies to make sure they caught voters before they returned their absentee ballots.

Then there's the possibility that districts that typically see a low turnout for the August primary could have a rush of new — and likely low-information — voters.

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How that all shakes out will be known sometime after the polls close tonight at 8 p.m.

Among the most interesting races are Dem primaries that will decide the fate of embattled Green Bay Rep. Staush Gruszynski and the successor to longtime Madison Sen. Fred Risser, retiring after 64 years in the Legislature.

Meanwhile, voters will decide a crowded field for the GOP nomination to replace Sen. Dave Craig, R-Big Bend, and choose between Rep. Rob Stafsholt, R-New Richmond and businesswoman Cherie Link for the party nomination to challenge Dem Sen. Patty Schachtner, a top target in November.

In all, 20 members of the Legislature aren't seeking reelection to the seats they held at the beginning of the 2019-20 session.

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