

# WEC: Wisconsin still needs poll workers

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MADISON, WI – Wisconsin clerks are at least 900 poll workers short statewide for the August 11 Fall Partisan Primary, according to the Wisconsin Elections Commission.

“We know there are Wisconsinites looking for ways to serve their communities through this difficult time,” said Meagan Wolfe, Wisconsin’s chief elections official. “If you are a state, county or municipal employee, a teacher, a student or someone who is looking for temporary work, municipal clerks need you to step up and help right now.”

Wolfe said the WEC is working closely with Wisconsin National Guard leadership on a request for soldiers and airmen to serve as poll workers in municipalities where critical shortages have been identified. The Governor’s office has not yet officially activated the National Guard to serve as poll workers.

“We know and appreciate that the National Guard is working on our request, but there is no guarantee they will be able to provide all or even some the personnel clerks need,” Wolfe said. “We understand the Guard is needed for other critical missions as our state deals with the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Wisconsin municipal clerks typically need between 25,000 and 30,000 poll workers to serve at polling places for an August primary. Because significant numbers of existing poll workers are in their 60s, 70s and 80s and have health conditions, clerks are experiencing shortages, Wolfe said.

The WEC has been surveying municipal clerks for the past month about their poll worker needs. Currently, clerks have identified serious or critical shortages of 938 poll workers in 153 municipalities. A spreadsheet containing clerk requests is attached to this news release.

Wolfe said the WEC staff has been working with clerks to refine and justify their requests for National Guard personnel.

Last week, the National Guard assisted the Elections Commission by distributing sanitary supplies, personal protective equipment and other polling place supplies to all 72 Wisconsin County Clerks, who are distributing them to the 1,850 municipal clerks. Enough surface disinfectant, hand sanitizer, and masks for poll workers have already been distributed to each polling place for both the August Partisan Primary and the November General Election.

## **How to Serve as a Poll Worker**

In Wisconsin, election inspectors are appointed at the municipal level. Anyone who is interested in working should contact their municipal clerk's office or visit the MyVote Wisconsin website: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/PollWorker>.

Wisconsin law allows people to serve as election inspectors in other municipalities within their county. If you are willing to serve in a municipality outside of your own,

let your clerk know and they can alert the county about your availability. You can also contact the county directly and can find contact information for county clerks here: <https://elections.wi.gov/clerks/directory>.

Municipal clerks will provide training for any new election inspectors before the election. Poll workers will also be supplied with personal protective equipment.

### **What are the responsibilities of a poll worker?**

Poll workers conduct assigned duties at a polling site on Election Day. Duties can include issuing ballots to registered voters, registering voters, monitoring the voting equipment, explaining how to mark the ballot or use the voting equipment, or counting votes.

Other positions at a polling place include a greeter who assists with answering questions and directing voters to the voting area, an election registration official to a polling place to register voters, and tabulators to assist at the polling place after it closes.

### **What are the hours of work?**

Polling places are open statewide from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Poll workers can work a full day, generally from 6:30 a.m. until approximately 9:00 p.m. or later in the case of November elections. In many municipalities, election inspectors can work a split shift.

### **Are poll workers (election inspectors) paid or volunteers?**

Poll workers are compensated for working at polling places at a rate determined by the appropriate municipal governing body, and, in some municipalities, are also

compensated for attending any required training sessions. Poll workers may also choose to volunteer their services by filing a written declination of compensation with the municipal clerk

### **What are the training requirements for poll workers?**

Municipal clerks are required by state law to provide training. This training provides all of the necessary information and knowledge to be a successful poll worker. (Many municipalities require poll workers to attend a comprehensive training course prior to each Primary election.)

### **What length of commitment will be expected?**

Poll workers are usually appointed to two-year terms and are generally asked to make a minimum two-year commitment. However, given the current circumstances volunteers for only the August 11 election are appreciated and should not be expected to meet the full two-year commitment.

### **Where will I be assigned?**

In smaller municipalities, there is often only one polling place. However, in larger municipalities there are multiple polling places. In larger municipalities, every effort is made to assign a poll worker to their neighborhood voting site. However, poll workers in larger municipalities such as large cities must be willing to be flexible and consider assignments at other sites. You may also be asked to serve in another municipality in your county if there is a greater need to volunteers outside of your municipality.

### **What are the qualifications to be a poll worker (election inspector)?**

#### **To be a poll worker, a person must:**

- Be a qualified elector of the county in which the municipality is located (i.e., an adult citizen of the United States who has resided in the election district for 10 consecutive days and is not otherwise disqualified to vote)
- Be able to read and write fluently in the English language
- NOT be a candidate for any office to be voted on at the polling place at that election.

### **How do I become a poll worker?**

If you are interested in becoming a poll worker you should apply directly to your town, village or city clerk. Find information about contacting your clerk's office here: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/PollWorker>.

### **Can I be excused from my regular job to be a poll worker?**

Wisconsin law requires every employer to grant an unpaid leave of absence to each employee who is appointed to serve as an election official, if the employee who serves as an election official provides their employer with at least seven days' notice. The leave is for the entire 24-hour period of each election day in which the employee serves in their official capacity as an election official. Upon request of any employer municipal clerks must verify appointments.

### **How do state employees become poll workers?**

Wisconsin Statutes provide that state employees appointed by a municipal clerk to serve as election officials must be granted leave without loss of pay or benefits for the entire 24-hour period of each election day in which the employee is serving as an election official. Employees must provide at least seven days' notice of the need for leave.

State employees may certify to the municipality that they choose not to be paid as poll workers. Alternatively, those state employees who receive pay as election officials must certify in writing to the (state) payroll office the amount of compensation received. The agency must deduct that amount from the employee's pay earned for scheduled work hours during the 24-hour period of the election day.

State employees who "volunteer" but are not appointed to be poll workers must take vacation or leave without pay if authorized by supervisory staff.