

WEC: Partisan Primary prepares election officials for November

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MADISON, Wis. – Few problems were reported in Tuesday’s Partisan Primary Election, in which nearly 26% of Wisconsin’s voting-age population turned out to vote, according to unofficial results, the highest level for a Partisan Primary in 40 years.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission has not yet certified the results of Tuesday’s primary, meaning all election results until then are subject to change and not final.

Wisconsin’s election officials smoothly navigated Tuesday’s primary, and the relatively high-turnout conditions will help prepare them to administer November’s typically high-participation November General Election.

“We’re proud of all the work Wisconsin’s more than 1,850 local clerks did to deliver successfully-run elections to their communities,” said WEC Administrator Meagan Wolfe. “Tuesday’s primary has left us confident that our clerks are well prepared to do so again for the November General Election.”

Wisconsin does not have a process for reporting unofficial statewide election night results. WEC does have links to the 72 county clerk websites, where clerks are required to post unofficial

results: <https://elections.wi.gov/clerks/directory/county-websites>.

Without an official statewide reporting process, the most reliable and accessible source of statewide and legislative district totals at this time is the Associated Press, which calculates unofficial turnout by adding together the unofficial votes cast in the highest-turnout statewide race for each political party on the ballot for which it collected data, and dividing the total by the state's voting-age population.

Unofficial results collected by the Associated Press indicate, as of Thursday, there were at least 1,193,736 votes cast in the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate and the Republican primary for governor, which is 25.5% of the state's estimated 2022 voting-age population of 4,674,916. That estimated number does not include votes for the Libertarian candidate for Secretary of State or the Constitution Party candidate for State Treasurer, which AP did not collect because they were uncontested.

Tuesday's unofficial turnout is the highest for a Partisan Primary since 1982, when 26.9% of Wisconsin's voting-age population turned out to vote. Between 2010 and 2020, the average Partisan Primary turnout in Wisconsin was 18.7%, ranging between 14.5% in 2014 and 23.03% in 2018.

Turnout can be calculated by dividing the estimated number of votes cast statewide or the estimated number of voters who participated in the election by the voting-age population as estimated by the Demographic Services Center of the Wisconsin Department of Administration. There may be small differences in how historical turnout data was calculated that could slightly affect the percentages.

Historical turnout statistics can be found at <https://elections.wi.gov/statistics-data/voter-turnout>.

The unofficial turnout figure likely represents an undercount of voters, as some voters may have chosen not to vote in their party's primary for U.S. Senate or

governor.

The WEC will publish official results once they have been canvassed at the local level and certified by the Commission.

Counties must convene their boards of canvassers by 9 a.m. on Tuesday, August 16 to begin certifying official results. The county board of canvassers is generally made up of the county clerk and two other people. County clerks are elected on a partisan basis, so one of the other two members must be from the opposite party of the county clerk. The deadline for counties to provide certified results to the WEC is Friday, August 19.

In the third step of the certification process, the WEC staff receive results from the counties, recheck all the counties' numbers and combine them to arrive at totals. The statutory deadline for the Chair of the WEC to certify statewide results is Wednesday, August 24.

All election results and turnout figures referenced before the Commission certifies the election results are unofficial and subject to change.

Election Day Assistance

Local clerks reported few issues on Tuesday beyond normal Election Day challenges, such as clerks in some jurisdictions needing to print more ballots to accommodate higher than expected turnout.

Per usual, the WEC provided Election Day assistance to both local clerks and voters, fielding more than 675 phone calls and 280 emails. The WEC also hired a third-party vendor to assist with Election Day calls. The vendor reported fielding more than 200 calls.

Voters asked a variety of questions, from how to find their polling place and how to register to vote, to how they should return their absentee ballot.