STATE AFFAIRS
WISPOLITICS
Wisconsin's Premier Political News Service

Wisconsin Elections Commission: Statement regarding Milwaukee election official

Posted on Friday, Nov 4, 2022

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. Get the app or access via desktop.

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Elections Commission made the following statement following reports of a City of Milwaukee election official allegedly fraudulently requesting three absentee military ballots:

"I am stunned and deeply disappointed by reports that a City of Milwaukee election official has violated election law, and undermined the trust of the public, of members of our armed forces, and of her fellow election workers," said WEC Administrator Meagan Wolfe.

"The actions of this single individual were swiftly detected and will have no impact the November 8 election. We however recognize that the damage caused by this action is damage to public confidence. This violation of trust cuts to the heart of election integrity, something that the Wisconsin Elections Commission and local election officials hold in the most serious regard. While the actions of this individual set us all back in our efforts to show Wisconsinites that our elections are run with integrity, I have every confidence the upcoming election will be fair and accurate.

"While this case understandably will receive a lot of attention, the fact remains that election fraud is extremely rare, and when it does occur, it is quickly discovered, and there are consequences.

"This lone individual's actions do not in any way reflect the high level of integrity that the rest of our local election officials – your friends, neighbors, and relatives – bring to their jobs every single day.

"While this incident is a deeply unfortunate violation of trust, it shows that our strong legal and election systems worked as intended to root out this alleged crime.

"I trust that our legal system will thoroughly investigate this matter and deliver accountability where appropriate. The Wisconsin Elections Commission stands ready to provide any information or data our law enforcement partners may request.

"Our understanding is that no other ballots, beyond those previously reported, have been affected by this individual's actions."

While Absentee ballots for members of our military are not subject to the same laws as other absentee ballots, military ballots themselves make up an average of .07% of total ballots requested. In the 2018 General Election, 2,700 military ballots were requested. For the 2022 General Election, 2,747 military ballots have been requested as of Thursday.

The fact that 2022 levels of military absentee ballot requests are roughly equivalent to 2018 levels shows it is highly unlikely other military ballot fraud has occurred in this election. That being the case, the WEC would welcome working alongside our partners in the Legislature to continue improving election safeguards to ensure election processes reserved for our military members are better secured and easily accessible.

There are multiple checks in the absentee process to prevent a fraudulent military absentee ballot from being counted.

- Military voters are required to list a valid Wisconsin residential address for their absentee ballot request.
- If an absentee ballot of a military voter is sent to an address other than the voter's residential address (and the mailing address isn't listed on the voter's registration form), the WEC has sent a postcard to the residential address to notify the voter of the absentee ballot request and provide them the opportunity to notify officials if they did not make the request. In Thursday's case, a state representative notified law enforcement officials of the irregular ballots.
- Local and state election officials may check up on individuals requesting military ballots be sent to a location other than a military facility in order to

ensure the ballot was properly issued.
- Local and state election officials monitor our systems for irregular absentee ballot requests.
- Throughout the process to request an absentee ballot, active military members must attest that they are a qualified elector. All absentee voters must also certify that they are making their request using their information and that providing false information is a crime.