

Election Records

Wisconsin Municipal Records Schedule

This section covers record series that are generally grouped under Elections Records. The schedule identifies records created by most municipalities and is applicable to all records regardless of format or media.

Municipalities must adopt this schedule or have an ordinance in place before it can be used to manage their records. Please read the Introduction section of the WMRS before applying ANY section of the schedule to your records.

To simplify the recordkeeping process for municipalities, the Wisconsin Historical Society has included a field identifying if notification is required before record series may be destroyed.

- Records identified as Waived means that the Wisconsin Historical Society has determined the record series to have low historical value and waived the notification period as indicated Wis. Stat. § 19.21(4)(a). Municipalities are free to destroy any waived records once they reach their required retention period.
- Records designated Notify require you send written notification to the WHS before destruction. Details about the notification process are available on the [Wisconsin Historical Society website](#).

Note: Notification should be given on any records 75 years or older regardless if they are marked waived.

Requirements Specific to Election Records

Additional information regarding election records is available through the Wisconsin Election Commission. Municipalities are encouraged to review the [Election Administration Manual](#) available on the Wisconsin Elections Commission Website for more in-depth information about managing election related records. Retention times in this section that are not specifically stated in Wisconsin Statutes are taken from the *Election Administration Manual*.

- Federal Election records must be maintained for 22 months as specified in Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(f).
- Recounts or Pending Litigation are subject to a longer retention pending litigation or recounts as specified in Wis. Stat. § 7.23(2).
- All other material not described below are identified by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(k) as having a retention period of 90 days after the election.

| Record Series Title | Series Description | Retention and Disposition | Confidential | WHS Notification |
|--|---|---|--------------|------------------|
| Ballots and Equipment | | | | |
| Applications for Absentee Ballots (Federal Elections) | Includes copies of proof of identification when submitted with application. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(f). | Event+22 months; Event=Election ¹ | No | Waived |
| Applications for Absentee Ballots (State, County, Local Elections) | Includes copies of proof of identification when submitted with application. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(k). | Event+90 days; Event=Election | No | Waived |
| Ballots (Federal Elections) | Federal election ballots. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(f). | Event+22 months; Event=Election | No | Waived |
| Ballots (State, County, Local Elections) | State, county, local offices. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(h). | Event+30 days; Event=Election | No | Waived |

¹ All materials and documentation associated with a federal election must be retained at least 22 months after the election. Federal elections include those for the office of President of the U.S., U.S. Senator, and U.S. House of Representatives (Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(f)).

| Record Series Title | Series Description | Retention and Disposition | Confidential | WHS Notification |
|--|--|---|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Ballots (Unused and related Materials) | Only applies to unused ballots and materials. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(a). | Event+3 business days; Event=Completion of all election canvasses ² | No | Waived |
| Detachable Recording Units | Data storage devices used in electronic voting equipment. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(g). | Event+21 days; Event=Election ³ | No | Waived |
| Detachable Recording Units (Primary Elections) | Data storage devices used in electronic voting equipment. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(g). | Event+14 days; Event=Election ⁴ | No | Waived |
| Campaign | | | | |

² Materials must be retained in event a petition for recount has been filed.

³ Before clearing or erasing the units or compartments, a municipal clerk shall transfer the data contained in the units or compartments to a disk or other recording medium which may be erased or destroyed 22 months after the election to which the data relates. The requirement to transfer data does not apply to units or compartments for use with tabulating equipment for an electronic voting system that was approved for use prior to January 1, 2009, and that is not used in a federal election.

⁴ Before clearing or erasing the units or compartments, a municipal clerk shall transfer the data contained in the units or compartments to a disk or other recording medium which may be erased or destroyed 22 months after the election to which the data relates. The requirement to transfer data does not apply to units or compartments for use with tabulating equipment for an electronic voting system that was approved for use prior to January 1, 2009, and that is not used in a federal election.

| Record Series Title | Series Description | Retention and Disposition | Confidential | WHS Notification |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Campaign Finance Reports | Financial disclosure reports filed by candidates during election campaigns. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(d). | Event+6 years; Event=date of receipt | No | Waived |
| Campaign Registration Statements | Statements filed by candidates for public office. Includes Notification of Non-candidacy for reelection forms. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(d). | Event+6 years; Event=termination issued by the registrant | No | Waived |
| Reports and Lists | | | | |
| Official Canvassers Statements | Prepared statement showing the results of each election. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(i). | Event+10 years; Event=election | No | Waived |
| Election Notices | Includes proofs of publication and correspondence filed in connection with such notices. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(j). | Event+1 year; Event=Election | No | Waived |
| Election Notices (Federal Elections) | Includes proofs of publication and correspondence filed in connection with such notices. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(j). | Event=22 months; Event=Election | No | Waived |

| Record Series Title | Series Description | Retention and Disposition | Confidential | WHS Notification |
|---|---|--|--------------|------------------|
| Election Voting and Registration Statistics Reports | Reports filed by municipal clerks on registration, voting, and absentee voting. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. §§ 6.275-6.276. | Event+22 months; Event=Election | No | Waived |
| Ineligible Elector Registrations | Elector registrations deemed ineligible for voting. Status and reasons for ineligibility should be noted. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(c). | Event+4 years; Event=When deemed ineligible | No | Waived |
| Poll (Voter) Lists | List compiled by election officials on election day showing the names and addresses of electors who actually cast votes in an election defined in Wis. Stat. § 5.02(14). Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 7.23(1)(e). | Event+22 months; Event=Election | No | Waived |