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WisconsinVoices.org

March 4, 2015

To: Government Accountability Board Members

Re: GAB Administrative Rule §3.50 (4) Charges for Voter Registration Data

Wisconsin has a long, proud history of making the political process accessible to the public. For the last few years, however, the high cost of voter registration data has been a barrier to people and organizations participating in the political process. Because of these costs, Wisconsin Voices asks the GAB to revisit GAB Administrative Rule §3.50 (4) and research ways to provide voter information data at a lower cost.

The State of Wisconsin has the 17th largest voter file (in terms of registered voters), but has the second highest price for the list in the nation. Currently the price of a list for all registered voters in the state is \$12,500. Similarly sized states have significantly lower prices and improved services. For example, a statewide voter registration list in Minnesota costs \$46.00, Michigan's is \$22.25. In Colorado, organizations can register for a yearly subscription for \$1,000, which includes electronic access to a new statewide voter file every month, absentee lists, and polling locations.

High prices affect smaller political parties and third party candidates. For example, in 2015 the Libertarian Party (which had four statewide, four assembly, one senate and one congressional candidates) would had to spend 27% of their contributions to buy one statewide voter file.¹ The high price of data keeps smaller organizations and parties from participating in the political process, or dependent on old data.

Like our non-profit partners, Wisconsin Voices' aims to be frugal with our spending and generous with our program initiatives. High prices affect our work and the work of our partners, which in turn affects voters. When organizations aren't able to update their voter lists as frequently, they are more likely to send mail or call voters with the wrong information. By lowering the cost and updating more frequently, you will allow organizations to continue their mission with greater benefit to the voter which means less contacts and more accuracy.

With the new BADGER Voters system, the GAB was able to significantly reduce the staffing costs of providing voter data. According to the GAB October 2014 meeting notes, the agency has been able to save over \$80,000 since launching the site.² Wisconsin Stat. §6.36 (6) gives the GAB the power to set the price of voter registration data, but the Board must set "an amount estimated to cover both the cost of reproduction and the cost of maintaining the list at the state and local level".³ If BADGER Voters has reduced the overall cost of reproducing the voter file, the GAB should revisit its pricing structure for data.

Wisconsin Voices, along with 60 non-partisan nonprofits across Wisconsin, respectfully ask the GAB to revisit GAB Administrative Rule §3.50 (4) and lower the overall cost of the voter file.

¹ Libertarian Party of Wisconsin GAB-2 January Continuing 2015 Report. January 6, 2015.

² GAB Open Session Complete Packet with Agenda, p. 55. October 28, 2014.

³ Official Registration List. WI Stat §6.36(6)