

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 23, 2020

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
BURNETT COUNTY CLERK
715-349-2173

Burnett County Needs Poll Workers!

SIREN, WI – Burnett County Clerk Wanda Hinrichs is calling on residents of Burnett County willing to serve as poll workers for the April 7 election to replace poll workers who are unable to serve due to age or health concerns from the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

Burnett County has approximately 150 poll workers, known as election inspectors, who serve at polling places. A significant number of them are in their 60s and 70s, and many may have other health conditions.

“We need the people of Burnett County to step up and help out,” said Ms. Hinrichs. “If you are a state, county or municipal employee, a teacher, a student or someone who is looking for temporary work, we need your help.”

In Wisconsin, election inspectors are appointed at the municipal level. Anyone who is interested in working should contact the clerk’s office immediately at 715-349-2173 or whinrichs@burnettcounty.org.

Wisconsin law also 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 the County Clerk know your availability.

Municipal clerks will provide training for any new election inspectors before the election.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services are working to provide local election officials with guidance for ways to conduct the election safely and securely.

Voter turnout at the polling place is expected to be much lower than normal, but workers are still needed to process a much higher number of absentee ballots than normal.

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 this election with increased paper ballots and 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.)

An experienced chief inspector who has been certified by the Wisconsin Elections Commission must be present at each polling place for each election. Chief inspectors must receive six hours of continuing election education training during each two-year period.

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 April 7 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.

A poll worker may also:

- Have strong clerical skills
- Be able to solve problems
- Be an effective communicator

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. For the April 7 election, if you wish to be a poll worker, please contact the County Clerk.

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.