



Wisconsin Elections Commission

201 West Washington Avenue | Second Floor | P.O. Box 7984 | Madison, WI 53707-7984
(608) 266-8005 | elections@wi.gov | elections.wi.gov

DATE: For August 31, 2026, Commission Meeting
TO: Members, Wisconsin Elections Commission
FROM: Wisconsin Elections Commission Staff
SUBJECT: Discussion and Possible Action Related to Milwaukee

At the request of the Chair of the Commission, the attached draft letter was prepared for the Commission's discussion at the August 31, 2026 meeting. The draft addresses the error made by the City of Milwaukee Election Commission (MEC) on the evening of the August 11, 2026 Partisan Primary by inadvertently producing an audit log report from five of the central count tabulators rather than the report of the unofficial results. This error led to a delay in the public announcement of the Milwaukee Central Count totals. The letter asks the City of Milwaukee to provide information to the public to explain what measures will be taken to ensure this mistake does not occur again. The City of Milwaukee has provided details about the error in a public statement which is included here as an attachment.

Possible Motion:

- 1) The Commission directs staff to issue the letter to the City of Milwaukee, with the following changes [add any edits directed by the Commission].

Wisconsin Elections Commissioners

Don M. Millis, chair | Marge Bostelmann | Ann S. Jacobs | Carrie Riepl | Robert Spindell | Mark L. Thomsen

Administrator
Meagan Wolfe



Wisconsin Elections Commission

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DATE: August 31, 2026
TO: Milwaukee Elections Commission & Executive Director Paulina Gutiérrez
FROM: Members of the Wisconsin Elections Commission

On August 31, 2026 the Wisconsin Elections Commission (“the Commission”) convened in an open session, public meeting and voted [vote of x-x] to issue this letter.

According to public reportingⁱ, the City of Milwaukee Election Commission (MEC) staff made an error on the evening of the August 11, 2026 Partisan Primary by inadvertently producing an audit log report from five of the central count tabulators rather than the report of the unofficial results. This error led to a delay in the public announcement of the Milwaukee Central Count totals.

Based on the public reporting, we are not aware of any compromise of the vote tally for the City of Milwaukee or the State of Wisconsin in any way. Nevertheless, mistakes and resulting delays can undermine the public’s confidence in the election process. Because of this, the Commission encourages MEC to provide detailed information to the public which addresses the following:

1) Make the central count tabulator audit logs from the night of August 11, 2026 public.

Publicly releasing the audit logs of each central count tabulator used on August 11, 2026, will conclusively prove that no unauthorized activity occurred between the time the audit report was initially run, the time the error was recognized, and when each central county tabulator ultimately produced a report of its unofficial results. While many observers from both political parties and members of the media were present and observing the tabulators during the download of results, it is important that the public-at-large be provided with a definitive record that shows no activity was conducted on the tabulators during the time period between download of the audit logs and the results report.

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2) **Provide a plan for how MEC staff will be trained to properly produce the unofficial tabulation results report for future elections.** We suggest considering the following questions:

- a. Could there be documentation, such as a checklist, provided to observers on Election night so that they may follow along with the process and understand that the results report was produced correctly? Consider making any documentation or training materials that can be shared without compromising security measures available to the public so voters, candidates, and political parties understand the steps MEC will take to transmit unofficial results on election night in a timely fashion.
- b. Will the download process be tested as part of the public test of the voting equipment prior to the next election? Could there be demonstrations of the download process available to observers and members of the media prior to Election Day to explain any process improvements?

To build confidence in Milwaukee's process ahead of the November General Election, MEC should answer these questions and provide information to the public as soon as practicable. Fair or unfair, the eyes of the nation are often on Milwaukee and providing transparency into the system, especially when a mistake occurs, is a critical service to the voters of our state.

Sincerely,

Members of the Wisconsin Elections Commission

ⁱ [Milwaukee Election Commission: Milwaukee Election Commission statement on August 11, 2026 election results delay - State Affairs Pro](#)

**Commissioners:**

Terrell Martin, Chair
Patricia Ruiz-Cantu
Douglas Haag

Executive Director:

Paulina Gutiérrez

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 12, 2026

Media Contact

Maricha Harris, Deputy Director
voterinfo@milwaukee.gov
414-708-2625

Milwaukee Election Commission Statement on August 11, 2026 Election Results Delay

On Tuesday, August 11, Wisconsin held its primary election. The Milwaukee Election Commission (MEC) experienced a one-hour delay in reporting **that did not impact the election results**. In response to media inquiries, MEC is outlining what happened in the Q&A below.

What happened?

At the conclusion of the City of Milwaukee's count of absentee ballots, elections staff are responsible for downloading results from nine tabulator machines onto nine secure flash drives. Those flash drives are then securely transported to the Milwaukee County Courthouse, where results are uploaded and reported.

On election night, election staff mistakenly downloaded audit logs rather than the election results from five of the tabulator machines. Once the downloading error was identified, election staff retrieved the full election results and conveyed them to the County Courthouse. This retrieval process caused an approximately one-hour delay in the reporting of election results.

Did this impact any votes or the accuracy of the election?

No. The issue delayed the reporting of Milwaukee's results, **but it did not affect the results**.

The election results remained intact and unchanged on the tabulators. No ballots were lost or changed, or needed to be recounted or retabulated.

How was the error identified?

The error was identified as early as possible in the process. When Milwaukee County Courthouse staff attempted to access the results files, they found that five flash drives contained audit logs rather than the complete results files. The error could not be caught sooner by MEC staff because, to maintain security, all material downloaded from the tabulators are encrypted and can only be opened by the Milwaukee County Election Commission at the County Courthouse. There is no opportunity for MEC staff to double-check or verify the contents of the flash drives.

What action did MEC take to address the issue?

After communicating with the public what had occurred, MEC staff returned to Central Count, where absentee ballots are counted and maintained, with members of the bipartisan Board of Election Commissioners and a Milwaukee Police Department escort. They downloaded the full results and securely transported them back to the County Courthouse.

As an additional layer of verification, MEC compared the first report detailing ballot totals by ward with the final version to ensure the two totals were identical. Media was present during this process to view both reports. Once the results files from all tabulators were uploaded, the County Clerk posted all of the results from the absentee ballots.

What is an audit log?

An audit log is a record generated by the tabulator that documents activity and events that occur on the machine. It is part of the election record. It is not the file containing election results. An audit log is one important safeguard to ensure the integrity and verifiability of the election process.

What other safeguards are already in place to ensure election integrity?

Multiple, independent safeguards ensure election integrity, from credential-controlled access to election equipment, to the presence of bipartisan observers, to overlapping checks and reconciliations at multiple stages. Each safeguard reinforces the others, preventing a single error from affecting the final outcome. Those safeguards were on display last night, working as intended to identify the issue and ensure it was promptly addressed with no effect on the results.

What happens next?

MEC regularly reviews its election protocols and will continue to do so, including to determine whether any current procedures, staffing, or other practices should be adjusted in advance of the November election.

Milwaukee voters should remain confident that elections in our city are administered fairly, transparently, securely, and in accordance with the law.

Media Availability

MEC staff are now focused on required post-election responsibilities, including reconciliation, canvass preparation and other time-sensitive election administration duties. MEC will not be conducting additional interviews on this matter over the next several days. This statement is intended to address the questions MEC has received to date. Additional questions may be submitted to voterinfo@milwaukee.gov, and MEC will provide additional information as appropriate.