

Who is Ashland County's longest-serving municipal clerk?

Meet Howard Scherwinski, the Town of Agenda Clerk since April 1971!

Howard is likely the longest-serving clerk of any town in the history of Ashland County, having spent 52 years in that role in Agenda. He's decided to retire in April 2023 after being responsible for running well over 100 fair and safe local elections.

He's hoping he can recruit or recommend someone as his replacement next spring, just as his predecessor did back in 1971 when he suggested to Howard that he'd be a good candidate for the job. The town will have a referendum on its November ballot to see if voters want an elected clerk again or have the town board appoint someone to the role.



Photo courtesy of Tom LaVenture, Price County Review

While he's enjoyed being the clerk, he's also ready to leave some of the very challenging tasks to the new person, especially all the highly technical online paperwork required to get American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the town. Howard says, "I was able to do my job OK without formal computer training, but the ARPA funding system online was getting to be more and more work, more hours per week, and those demands got really hard. But you have to stick with it."

He'll miss the favorite part of his job, which is "working with the people." He enjoyed helping people get ready for elections, process property taxes, write permits and licenses, and other tasks. Covid-19 restrictions complicated the voting process, and he sent out a lot more absentee ballots than ever before, especially to elderly voters who couldn't safely get to the polling place.

"That all took more time, but I enjoyed helping people vote."

He's hoping he'll be able to train his replacement next spring, especially "someone who enjoys the work and takes interest in helping the town." He's looking forward to sleeping more after retirement to make up for lost sleep working so many days at the town hall. He and his wife Judy also want to visit with their 5 children and over a dozen grandchildren. "We used to like to take bus tours, and maybe I've got another tour in me," he says.

However Howard Scherwinski decides to savor his golden years, we heartily thank him for his dedicated service as a local elected official, making Agenda and Ashland County a better place to live for the last 52 years!

*Election results were provided by Ashland County Clerk's Office and are available online at the Ashland County web site:

https://co.ashland.wi.us/county_clerk Published August 2022.

Source for information and state statistics: Wisconsin Elections Commission web site at <https://elections.wi.gov/elections>, and Wisconsin Public Television web site.

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Ashland County Votes!

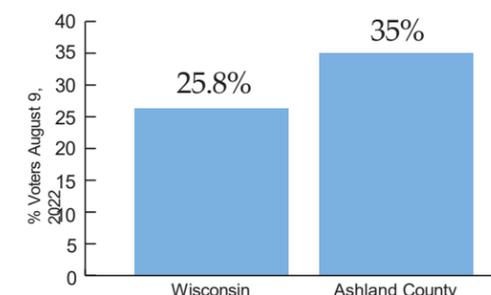
Partisan Primary Election Summary: Voting Results from August 9, 2022

Welcome to Ashland County's August 2022 election summary!

Wisconsin's elections are highly decentralized, with elections conducted at the local level by over 1,900 local election officials in 72 counties and 1,851 municipalities. There are 16 municipalities in Ashland County that have election responsibilities.

In this election, there were 9,605 registered voters in Ashland County. Of those voters, 3,428 cast a ballot on August 9, which is a 35% participation rate for the County. By comparison, only 25.8% of all registered voters in Wisconsin participated in the election on August 9, the highest participation rate since 1982.

**Eight towns in the County had participation rates over 40%, which is a significant turnout for a primary election!



Percent of registered voters who voted on August 9, 2022 in the state of Wisconsin and Ashland County

Ashland County, Wisconsin: August 9, 2022 Primary Election Results (unofficial)* Tally of Voters in 16 Jurisdictions

Jurisdictions	# Registered Voters	# People who Voted	% Registered Voters who Voted
Town of Agenda	269	122	45%**
Town of Ashland	358	172	48%**
Town of Chippewa	245	77	31%
Town of Gingles	535	194	36%
Town of Gordon	197	90	45%**
Town of Jacobs	383	136	35%
Town of LaPointe	318	134	42%**
Town of Marengo	255	101	39%
Town of Morse	362	145	40%**
Town of Peeksville	103	48	46%**
Town of Sanborn	617	97	15%
Town of Shanagolden	93	42	45%**
Town of White River	605	186	31%
Village of Butternut	205	91	44%**
City of Ashland: All wards	4,678	1,550	27%
City of Mellen	382	143	37%
TOTAL	9,605	3,428	35%

The Four Main Participants in Elections

1. Municipal Clerks

Ashland County and each city, town, and village has its own clerk who is appointed by local officials or elected every two years by the voters of their jurisdiction. The current Ashland County Clerk is Heather Schutte, who was elected in 2013.

A Municipal Clerk is also the chief election official who conducts all federal, state, county, local, and school elections. Each clerk is a partner in the state's process of carrying out open, fair, and transparent elections. Municipal clerks are responsible for:

- Establishing polling places
- Acquiring voting equipment
- Recruiting and training poll workers
- Maintaining voter lists
- Administering absentee voting
- Supervising the conduct of elections

The Wisconsin Election Commission trains them how to run elections, and many clerks get additional training from UW Extension, Wisconsin Towns Association, Wisconsin Counties Association, and other agencies and groups.

2. Election Workers/Officials

An election worker (also called an election official or poll worker) is defined as “an individual who is charged with any duties relating to the conduct of an election.” Wis. Stat. § 5.02(4e). This includes chief inspectors, elections inspectors, greeters, tabulators, and high school poll workers. As election officials, they perform a very important public service by maintaining the high quality and integrity of Wisconsin's elections.

All election workers are required to take in-person or online training sessions, some of which are required by state law. They have many roles:

- A greeter answers questions and directs voters to the voting area, checks the voter's photo ID, and verifies they are eligible to vote
- An election registration official registers voters at polling sites
- Tabulators help at the polling place after it closes.
- Issue ballots to registered voters at a polling site
- Register voters at a polling place
- Monitor the voting equipment
- Explain how to mark the ballot or use voting equipment
- Count votes.



Poll workers at the City of Ashland polling site at Northwood Technical College in August 2022.

In Ashland County, there were 16 clerks and about 100 election workers. Some election officials were working at the polls for their first time in August, and some have been working for decades.

Wisconsin election officials can choose to be affiliated with and nominated by a political party, or be unaffiliated with any party. A poll worker must be a qualified voter of the county served by the polling place where they work.

3. Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC)

The Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) was established in 2016 by the Wisconsin Legislature to carry out a wide range of functions related to statewide elections administration.

The WEC serves as a resource for local clerks by providing them with education, training, and support materials. The agency also fulfills several statewide election responsibilities, such as helping ensure compliance with federal and state election laws, ensuring election accuracy, and maintaining the statewide voter registration database.

The WEC is governed by six Commissioners, with three Commissioners representing the Democratic Party and three representing the Republican Party. Two of the Democrats and two of the Republicans are selected by their respective Legislative leadership. One Democrat and one Republican must be former municipal or county clerks and are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate.

Commissioners serve in a part-time capacity for staggered five-year terms. The Commission's administrator, required by law to be nonpartisan, is selected by the Commissioners and confirmed by the Senate. As Wisconsin's chief election official, the administrator serves as the agency's chief executive, leads the agency's non-partisan staff, and carries out the Commission's directives.

“We're proud of all the work Wisconsin's more than 1,850 local clerks did to deliver successfully-run elections to their communities,” said WEC Administrator Meagan Wolfe. “Tuesday's primary has left us confident that our clerks are well prepared to do so again for the November General Election.”

4. Voters! (Page 1 highlights how voters participated in this election)

When is the next election, and what offices will we vote for?

The mid-term general election will be held on Tuesday, November 8, 2022. All 435 seats in the federal House of Representatives and 35 of the 100 seats in the federal Senate (including Wisconsin) will be contested.

Thirty-nine state gubernatorial (including Wisconsin) and numerous other state and local elections will also be contested. The 2022 Fall elections will be the first to take place under new congressional and legislative maps, reflecting the results of the 2020 United States census.

Important Dates for the November Election!

October 19, 2022: Deadline to register by mail and deadline to register to vote online using [MyVote.wi.gov](https://myvote.wi.gov).

November 4, 2022 @ 5:00 p.m.: Deadline to register in your municipal clerk's office.

November 8, 2022: Mid-term election day!