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TO: Chairwoman Marina Dimitrijevic

FROM: Colleen Foley, Deputy Corporation Counsel

RE: Voter Registration Program Informational Memorandum

DATE: October 9, 2014

Referral of this memorandum to the Judiciary, Safety and General Services Committee is requested as an information-only item.

The County Board, by Resolution 14-333, directed this office to implement a Voter Registration Program to allow Milwaukee County residents to register to vote at locations where they apply for, renew, or update information for the receipt of social services from Milwaukee County. The Resolution identified potential sites as including Food Share, Disability Services, Housing, Child Support, and Veterans services. Additionally, an amendment to the Resolution provided that the County Treasurer's Office be included as a site.¹ The Resolution recommends issuance of declination forms, which are not recognized or issued by the State's governing election body, the Government Accountability Office Board (GAB). The Resolution also recommends that Milwaukee County notify potential voters on whether their registrations are accepted, a service solely within the GAB's statutory authority. *See Wis. Stat. 6.235.* Finally, the Resolution recommends that the Voter Registration Program include automated text messages voter alerts concerning pending elections.

Selection of Benefit Sites: Milwaukee County lacks an established list of "benefit" sites or even a uniform definition of the term "benefits." Therefore, this office created and refined its best approximation of benefit/service sites based on multiple inquiries across county departments. The following benefit sites were selected based on breadth of service, customer volume, and levy funding:

¹ Food Share is a State of Wisconsin program and therefore ineligible as a site. Child Support as a site presents time keeping and federal reimbursement issues according to Director Jim Sullivan. Specifically, the federal government reimburses child support work under section IV-D of the Social Security Act at a 66% rate. Child Support employees are subject to periodic reporting requirements designed to ensure IV-D dollars are devoted to those IV-D activities. Since voter registration does not qualify as a IV-D activity, employee time would need to be distinctly accounted and paid for, ultimately resulting in less attention to the child support program itself and potentially causing a loss of performance dollars over time. Additionally, the Milwaukee County Registry of Deeds Office serves nearly 50,000 citizens annually for services involving vital records, real estate research, and documentation issues, but given that volume, will make information packets available, but not actual voter registration.

Office of Milwaukee County Clerk: serves approximately 11,800 individuals per year based on issuance of marriage licenses, domestic partnerships, passports, and Department of Natural Resource licenses.

Section 8 Housing/Rent Assistance: serves approximately 35 individuals a day or 12,565 a year at its City Campus. It is heavily funded by federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) dollars, but HUD does not prohibit voter registration.

Disability Resource Center: serves approximately 1,300 individuals a year, but only its burial service, which serves approximately 300, is funded by tax levy dollars.

Milwaukee Justice Center: serves approximately 10,000 persons per year.

Milwaukee County Treasurer's Office: serves approximately 300 to 400 persons annually with decreasing numbers each year based on increasing reliance on services via the internet.

Milwaukee County Veterans' Office: serves approximately 3,900 individuals per year.

Special Registration Deputy (SRD) Training/Recognition: Each municipality within Milwaukee County must assign its own SRD number. Since individual SRD numbers must be assigned by each municipal clerk regardless of a universal training, each SRD would have 19 different numbers associated with his/her SRD status. County employees from 5 of the 6 identified benefit sites (13 employees total) have undergone the City of Milwaukee Election Commission SRD training. Though 15 of the 19 Milwaukee County municipalities will recognize City of Milwaukee training (Brown Deer, River Hills, Glendale, and Fox Point will not), Oak Creek and Greenfield and likely others nonetheless require that the SRDs present identification and personally take the SRD oath before them before issuance of the SRD number. The impacted employees will require one-half to a full day of obtaining SRD registration confirmation by participating municipal clerks. The GAB recommends that before voter registration begins, the SRDs should be registered by all Milwaukee County municipalities that recognize that training. So, though this office had anticipated a pilot program to run up through October 15, 2014 (the legal cutoff date before the November 6 election for SRD registration), that cannot occur under the circumstances. SRD registration will be pursued for subsequent election cycles.

Assessment of Text Message Voter Alerts: The GAB compiles and electronically maintains an official voter registration called the Statewide Voter Registration System (SRVS). *See* Wis. Stat. 6.36(1)(a). The SRVS contains the voter's name, address, date of birth, ward and aldermanic district, unique registration identification number assigned by the GAB, valid operator's license number, and last 4 digits of the elector's social security account, among other data. It also contains "such other information as may be determined by the GAB to facilitate administration of elector registration requirements." A voter's cell phone number is not required and only listed if the voter provides it. There are approximately 540,000 active registered voters in Milwaukee County. It is unknown how many of those voters' cell phone numbers are listed on the SRVS and how many of those voters would opt-in with their provider for the text message alert.

The SRVS can be electronically accessed by County and is available for a fee established by the GAB. *See* Wis. Stat. 6.36(6). The price is \$25.00 + \$5.00 per 1,000 voters (\$5.00 for up to the first thousand, and then rounded to the nearest thousand thereafter). So, $540 \times \$5.00 = \$2,700.00$ for the 540,000 Milwaukee County SRVS. The price for printed data is .25/page plus the cost of postage. Since the SRVS is constantly updated (relocations, disqualifications, deaths), the currency of the list and therefore quoted prices are only valid for 15 days. The GAB attempts to provide the requested data within 5-7 business days of receiving payment.

Besides the SRVS cost, there are costs to contract for text messaging services since IMSD lacks the capacity to provide it. Price examples include the Milwaukee County Department of Administrative Services (DAS) contract for severe weather text alerts to roughly 4,000 county employees for \$5,000. Other departments are considering, but not yet proceeding on cost sharing plans for various text messaging services. Everbridge, an outside vendor, quoted an “unlimited use pricing” package of \$95,000 per year. Quotes from 3 other vendors ranged from .03 to .05 per text message. Just using the .03/.05 quote, and assuming that 250,000 of the registered County voters own a cell phone and would opt in for the text messages, the cost of 1 annual text message to those 250,000 voters would be \$7,500 at .03/message or \$12,500 at .05/message. Increasing frequency to 3 text alerts per year would be \$22,500 and \$37,500, respectively. Since the Milwaukee County Clerk now heads up the Milwaukee County Election Commission by statute, that office would be the likely candidate to spearhead and bear any voter text message alert costs.

Promotion of Voter Registration at Sites: Laminated signage for the benefit site lobbies is available for a cost of approximately \$50.00 (total) for 2 signs per site. The signage essentially states that voter registration is available on site upon inquiry to the front desk. Additionally, Milwaukee County-sponsored voter registration sites could be publicized via buses and bus stops. Again, a designated county department would need to build such costs into its budget, with the Milwaukee County Election Commission being the most likely candidate.

Fiscal Analysis: A limited analysis of the training component of the voter Registration Act is attached.

Fiscal Impact of Voter Registration Program as currently proposed

On April 24, 2014 County Board File No 14-333 was approved which directed the Office of Corporation Counsel to develop a recommended ordinance and related procedures to formally implement a Voter Registration Program. The Office of Corporation Counsel has worked to establish a Voter Registration Program and worked with the Office of the Comptroller to estimate the annual cost of the Program.

The program will involve individuals from seven County Departments receiving training on assisting people in filling out voter Registration forms. In addition, the County will return the completed forms to the proper municipality. The Office of the Comptroller contacted all participating departments and verified that no overtime or temporary help was utilized in the process of obtaining training nor is any overtime or temporary help anticipated in the process of assisting the public with filling out Voter Registration forms.

Annual estimated costs of the Program will primarily be signage alerting the public to the offered service and postage costs as completed forms will need to be forward within a minimal number of days to the appropriate municipalities. It is anticipated that the Voter Registration Program's annual costs will not exceed \$1,000 County-wide.