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THE USE OF VOTING MACHINES IN WISCONSIN MUNICIPALITIES

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Voting by machine has been permitted in Wisconsin since 1901 when Chapter 459 establishing the procedure was enacted.
2. In the course of the past half century no less than 30 units of local government in Wisconsin have at one time or another used voting machines.
3. Milwaukee which began the use of voting machines in 1902 was the first Wisconsin city to use them. Among those municipalities currently using them, Sheboygan which began in 1904 and South Milwaukee which began in 1908, have the most experience.
4. It is possible to account for 20 Wisconsin municipalities including 12 cities, 6 villages and 2 towns which are currently using voting machines. Twelve of these adopted them since World War II.
5. Virtually all of the municipalities use the same brand of machine.
6. The number of machines per unit of government varies from 3 in Greendale to 105 in Madison. The population per machine varies from 642 in Wisconsin Rapids to 1,571 in the Town of Oshkosh.
7. The number of voters using a single machine varies from 144 to 650.
8. Generally speaking, voting machines are not considered expensive, originally or in the long run.
9. All communities agree that voting machines save time in the process of voting or in the task of counting votes.
10. Virtually no mechanical failures are noted in the 20 municipalities.
11. Most communities keep the machines where the polls are located. Only 3 communities keep them in a central location.
12. Fifteen of the 20 use schools for polls, 5 use fire stations, 3 use libraries and 12 use other public places.
13. No difficulty in instructing voters in the use of machines has been encountered, and all have used pre-election day instruction, generally in the city hall, to train the voters.
14. Most communities do not feel that the weight of the machines affects the location of the polls.
15. In no case would the municipal officials charged with carrying out the elections favor return to the paper ballots. In most cases they are emphatic in their support of the machines.
16. The use of machines has generally resulted in some savings in labor and printing costs, but its major advantages lie in quicker returns and greater accuracy.

THE USE OF VOTING MACHINES IN WISCONSIN MUNICIPALITIES

BACKGROUND

In December 1951 the Legislative Council of Oklahoma submitted a questionnaire to us asking 11 questions about the use of voting machines in elections in Wisconsin. We were unable to find anyone who knew how many units of government in Wisconsin use voting machines or how well they were received. We felt that information regarding this method of voting was important. We, therefore, asked 15 questions about this operation of the 20 municipalities of Wisconsin known to use voting machines. The core of this report is their reply.

Voting machines were authorized in Wisconsin by Chapter 459, Laws of 1901. The statutes relating thereto are now contained in sections 11.03 to 11.17. Milwaukee was the first Wisconsin city to adopt them. In 1902 they purchased 15 machines. By 1916 when they were abandoned, the number had been increased to 143, one for each voting precinct. In 1903 Beloit purchased 3 machines which were used for some years. Racine purchased 11 machines in 1903 and increased the number until by 1915 they had 18. Milwaukee County adopted them outside the city of Milwaukee in 1903. Janesville, Oshkosh, and Sheboygan purchased their first machines in 1904. By 1915 the roll call of cities which had made some use of them included the following:

Appleton	Marinette
Beloit	Milwaukee
Fond du Lac	Oshkosh
Janesville	Racine
Kenosha	Sheboygan
Madison	Superior
Manitowoc	

There were major criticisms of voting machines during that period partly because of the mechanical problems involved, and partly because of resistance to something new. There is some evidence that certain election laws were enacted specifically in order to confuse the use of voting machines. It was soon learned that it was not possible to challenge a vote after it had been recorded on a voting machine. Certain methods of manipulating the vote were uncovered. The enactment of the La Follette "Mary Ann" law relating to the marking of first and second choices for U.S. senator created a problem because theretofore the machines had been specifically geared to prevent voting for more than one candidate for any office. One writer in a letter to the editor of the Milwaukee Free Press in April 1909 said, "Wisconsin in a spell of insanity instituted voting machines some years ago."

Until 1927 the statutes provided for the Wisconsin Voting Machine Commission which had to approve all machines before they could be put into operation in any municipality. Some of the criteria upon which approval was based were:

1. It must be impossible to tamper with the machine.
2. It must not be possible to read the vote until the election is over.

3. It must be possible to vote either a straight or split ticket.
4. It must be impossible to vote for more than one candidate for any one office.
5. Provision must be made for voting yes or no to referendum propositions.
6. Provision must exist for voting for presidential electors as a whole.
7. If they are to be used at a primary election, a special attachment must be connected to prevent voting more than one party ticket.

In 1940 Milwaukee voted against the use of voting machines at a referendum, 146,968 against and 98,590 for. At that time it was estimated that it would cost a million dollars to install them. In 1949 it was estimated that 800 machines would cost between \$1,068,000 and \$1,128,000. At that time it was estimated that it would cost \$100,000 to provide storage for the machines. Milwaukee has never acted to reinstate the machines.

In 1915 and again in 1939 some effort was made to bring together information on the use of the machines in this state. Following is a compilation of the materials contained in the surveys of 1915 and 1939 as well as the results of the survey made in connection with this report.

Summary of Data on Use of Voting Machines in Wisconsin Municipalities in 1915*

<u>City</u>	<u>Year Adopted</u>	<u>Number Used</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Appleton	1908	6	Consider them most perfect and have had no trouble of any kind during their use here. The average voter can vote more quickly and more accurately... Another point is the elimination of disputed returns. With the machine, returns are automatically made on the back thereof.
Beloit	1903	2	Have not been used in the past 4 or 5 years. If we had voting machines for each precinct in all probability they would be more popular.
Fond du Lac	1909	16	When once the voters have become accustomed to their use they can vote somewhat faster and with more accuracy...; they cannot spoil their vote by marking in the wrong place or in the wrong way; the result of the election is known as soon as the polls are closed; there can be no mistake in the count as

* Taken from MacGregor, Ford H. Voting Machines in Wisconsin. Municipal Reference Bulletin No. 3, University of Wisconsin. Feb. 1915.

<u>City</u>	<u>Year Adopted</u>	<u>Number Used</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Fond du Lac(contd.)			the election officers have nothing to do but copy the figures from the machine. The cost of conducting elections is considerably less than it was before the machines were installed.
Janesville	----	5	Found them very successful. They have been used several times and will be used considerably in the future.
Kenosha	----	9	Use very satisfactory.
Madison	1906	2	To give the best results voting machines...should be used in all the precincts of the city. This not only accustoms all the voters to the use of machines but obviates the necessity of 2 publications.
Manitowoc	----	1	Its use was dispensed with owing to the fact that 2 publications were required, one for the paper ballot and one for the machine, which has been costing the county \$800 for publication fees alone for every election. Then, besides...the voter becomes confused when voting and instead of voting for candidates of different party designations he votes for only one party instead of voting for different candidates as was his intention.
Marinette	----	--	At one time the city used one voting machine. For some reason it was discontinued.
Milwaukee	1902	143	Reduction in number of election precincts. Reduction in number of election officers. Saving cost of printed ballots. Absolutely correct canvass of votes. Never had an election contest when machines were used. Results known about 30 minutes after polls close. Permits the elector to cast his ballot whichever way he desires. (Also used in all precincts outside city in county)
Oshkosh	1904	17	In 1904, 3 machines bought and found so satisfactory that in 1909, 14 more bought and all voting done on them since. The votes are all

<u>City</u>	<u>Year Adopted</u>	<u>Number Used</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Oshkosh(Cont.)			counted automatically and in less than 30 minutes the result is known. Every vote is recorded. There are no blank or lost votes and every man who enters the machine must vote. The people of Oshkosh are well satisfied with the machines and would under no consideration go back to the old ballot system. Several Wisconsin cities have machines but do not have men who have made a study of the machine and are unable to set them up for all elections.
Racine	1907-8	--	No cause for complaint whatever.
Sheboygan	----	10	Have not been using them because they are not arranged for the non-partisan ticket. We will use them in the general election.
Superior	1909	15	There was considerable dissatisfaction with the voting machines the first 2 or 3 times they were used, but now that our citizens are conversant with the operation of the machines, we have very little complaint. There are, of course, some skeptical people in our city that will never favor the machine for voting and who talk against its use every election. They have been in use in Superior for about 6 years, and I would say that they are a success. After 6 years use I find the election officers need very little instruction at election. Heretofore, the election officers were called in to receive instructions, but for the last 2 or 3 years we have dispensed with this. As an example of the efficiency of the voting machine, at the last election in one ward with one machine 775 votes were cast.

In 1939 a study by Max P. Heavenrich, Jr. for the Flint Institute of Research and Planning entitled "The Use of Voting Machines in 35 Cities or Counties" cited certain information regarding the use of such devices in 4 Wisconsin cities. The data relating to the Wisconsin cities was as follows:

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<u>Item</u>	<u>Sheboygan</u>	<u>Oshkosh</u>	<u>Fond du Lac</u>	<u>South Milwaukee</u>
Population	40,800	40,108	29,000	10,706
Electoral Registration	19,000	20,000	13,500	6,000
Maximum vote cast	16,000	16,500	11,350	4,000
No. of Machines				
Owned	33	30	23	10
Used	32	30	22	10
Machines used in all elections	Yes	Yes	Yes	City only
Machines used in all precincts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are paper ballots ever used?	No	No	Mail only	State and county
When first purchased?	1929	1927	1929	1909
Have any been replaced?	No	No	Yes	No
Average usefulness in years	Until city outgrows style bought	--	--	Forever
Approximate cost per machine	\$1,058	--	\$1,800	\$1,000
Approximate upkeep cost	Less than \$50	Practically nothing	None	None
How originally financed?	Taxes	Installments	Time payment plus interest	----
Do you recommend other methods of financing?	No	----	No	----
Cost of election				
Before use	1¢	---	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢	----
After use	5/8 of 1¢	Less than 10¢	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢	----
Cause of difference in election costs	Timesaver, Quicker voting Quicker results	---	Less clerical help Less paper ballots	----
No. of election officials				
Before	5-7	7	8	----
After	5-7	5	5	----
Fees to election officials	\$12 chm. \$ 9 clerk	\$5 clerk \$6 inspector	\$10	----

STATISTICAL DATA ON THE USE OF VOTING MACHINES
IN WISCONSIN MUNICIPALITIES IN 1952*

Municipality (c) City (v) Village (t) Town	In what year did you start using voting machines?	How many machines do you have?	How many voters, on an average, use a single machine on one election day?	Do you consider voting machines expensive? Originally?	Do you consider voting machines expensive? Ultimately?	Do voting machines save time?	About how many mechanical failures or breakdowns have you had per election?	Are the machines kept permanently at the location of the polls?	If not, is it expensive to transport them to and from the polling places?
Appleton (c)	1952	43		no	no	yes(4)		part	(22)
Cudahy (c)	1942	16	375	no	no	yes(5)	none	yes	--
Eau Claire (c)	1941	44	300	--	no	yes(6)	none	yes	--
Fond du Lac (c)	1928	22	600	no	no	yes(7)	none	no	(23)
Fox Point (v)	1951(1a)	4	328(2)	no	no	yes(8)	none	yes	--
Greendale (v)	1948	2	450	no	no	yes(9)	none	yes	--
Kimberly (v)	1952(1)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
La Crosse (c)	1946	56	144-332	no	no	yes(10)	few	yes	--
Lake (t)	1942	20	400	no	no	yes(11)	one	yes	--
Little Chute (v)	1952(1)	5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Madison (c)	1947	105	400-500	yes	no	yes(12)	no	yes	--
Oshkosh (c)	1920	32	600	no	no	yes(13)	few	yes	--
Oshkosh (t)	1950	3	400	yes	no	yes(14)	none	yes	--
Sheboygan (c)	1904	39	650	no	no	yes(15)	no	no	(24)
Shorewood (v)	1940	21	250	yes	no	yes(16)	none	yes	--
South Milwaukee (c)	1908	15	600	no	no	yes(17)	none	yes	--
Wauwatosa (c)	1948	45	350	--	--	yes(18)	none	yes	--
West Allis (c)	1946	52	350-400	--	--	(19)	none	yes	--
Whitefish Bay (v)	1948	16	400-500	no	no	yes(20)	none	yes	--
Wisconsin Rapids (c)	1950	21	150	yes	(3)	yes(21)	none	no	(25)

*Data procured from questionnaires submitted to the clerks of 20 municipalities, by the Legislative Reference Library, January 1952.

STATISTICAL DATA ON THE USE OF VOTING MACHINES (Contd.)

	Do you use schools as voting places?	Do you use fire stations as voting places?	Do you use libraries as voting places?	Do you use other places as voting places?	Have you encountered difficulty in instructing voters on the use of the machines?	Did you use a pre-election day instruction period the first time with voting machines?	In business houses?	City Hall?	Other public places?	Does the weight and bulk of the machine present a problem in selecting the polling places?	Would you consider returning to the old system of paper ballots?	Do you know of any Wisconsin municipality which abandoned the machines after once using them?	Can you estimate the financial savings resulting from the use of voting machines?
Appleton	yes			yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	(28)
Cudahy	yes				no	yes		yes	yes	yes	no	no	(29)
Wau Claire	yes			yes	no	yes		yes	yes	no	no	no	(30)
Fond du Lac	yes		yes	yes	no	yes (26a)		yes		yes (27)	no	no	(31)
Fox Point		yes			no	yes			yes	no	no	no	(32)
Greendale				yes	no	yes			yes	yes	no	no	(33)
Kimberly													
La Crosse	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	(34)
Lake	yes			yes	no	yes		yes		no	no	no	(35)
Little Chute					no	yes			yes			no	
Madison	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes		yes		no	no	no	(36)
Oshkosh (c)	yes	yes			no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	
Oshkosh (t)				yes	no (26)	yes		yes		no	no	no	
Sheboygan	yes				no	yes		yes		no	no	no	(37)
Shorewood	yes	yes		yes	no	yes		yes		no	no	no	(38)
South Milwaukee	yes			yes	no	yes		yes		no	no	yes (27a)	(39)
Wauwatosa	yes			yes	no	yes		yes	yes	no	no	no	(40)
West Allis	yes			yes	no	yes		yes		no	no	no	(41)
Whitefish Bay	yes				no	yes			yes	no	no	no	(42)
Wisconsin Rapids	yes				no	yes			yes	no	no	no	(43)

- (1) Using voting machines for first time in 1952.
- (1a) The village will use the machine until 1953. In April 1953 the voters will decide at a referendum whether or not to buy the machines.
- (2) Very light election.
- (3) You may get your money back in savings in about 50 years.
- (4) Eliminates all night counting, reduces recounts.
- (5) Time saved over counting ballots an average of 3-1/2 hours.
- (6) Returns available 2 hours after closing of polls.
- (7) No necessity waiting for ballots, marking same and folding and inserting in ballot box.
- (8) There is a saving of time in arriving at the total number of votes cast for each office.
- (9) Election results are obtained 1/2 hour after polls close. Heretofore, it took 6 to 8 hours.
- (10) Returns in from 21 wards within one hour, compared to several hours under the paper ballot system.
- (11) Immediate returns and no errors in recounts.
- (12) Speedy, accurate, pleasant voting--no defective ballots. The all night paper ballot tabulating with all its errors is a thing of the past. Returns are speedy, polls close at 8 p.m., returns begin coming in at 8:15 p.m. depending on the election; at no time have complete returns been later than 10 p.m.
- (13) Returns are always available a 1/2 hour after close of polls.
- (14) When the polls are closed, it only takes about 30 minutes to record the vote on each machine.
- (15) Average about 1/2 minute per person.
- (16) Faster voting and no ballots to count.
- (17) Yes, especially in determining final results, no tallying necessary.
- (18) Saves time in voting and does away with counting paper ballots after polls are closed.
- (19) Results of election known about as quickly as polls are closed. Slower in actual voting.
- (20) Election workers are through 1 hour after the polls close.
- (21) Election returns are available in 1/4 of the time.
- (22) Relative cost not considered expensive.
- (23) Offset this expense by having machines in central place under good supervision.
- (24) A truck and crew of 5 men--2 days.
- (25) 5 men and a truck about 1/2 day each way.
- (26) Voters take to these machines like a duck takes to water.
- (26a) We keep an extra machine in the city hall to instruct newly registered voters.

- (27) All are installed in basement or ground floor.
- (27a) City of Milwaukee.
- (28) Within 10-year period over \$52,000 can be saved.
- (29) About \$120 an election. Reduces the number of booth workers from 7 to 5 in each ward.
- (30) Financial saving considerable but elimination of errors, early reports and eliminating long waits by voters main consideration.
- (31) Saves cost of 2 ballot clerks in each of 21 wards.
- (32) We would have had to divide the village into 3 precincts in 1951. By using machines we could remain at 2 precincts and will be able to remain at 2 for many years.
- (33) Our election costs were \$101 per election for salaries. Costs now are \$41.50. There is a slight increase in printing because of quality.
- (34) About \$300 per election, based on personnel alone.
- (35) About \$275 is saved per election.
- (36) Our purchase will be amortized in 12 to 14 years.
- (37) No financial saving but time saving.
- (38) Our savings have been considerable over the years.
- (39) I don't believe there is any financial saving; if there is, it is insignificant. The cost of setting up the machines offsets the cost of 2 clerks who are eliminated. The use of voting machines eventually develops into a greater trust and feeling of security that votes cannot be tampered with on a machine.
- (40) Approximately \$800 an election.
- (41) Minor. Reduced number of precincts from 26 to 17.
- (42) 5 workers per booth instead of 7 at \$13 a day, printing of ballots, etc.
- (43) Very little.