



# Wisconsin Elections Commission

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**DATE:** Mar 13, 2024  
**TO:** Municipal and County Clerks Impacted by New Legislative Maps  
**FROM:** WEC Staff  
**SUBJECT:** Wards Split by New Legislative Districts

## **1. Purpose & Summary.**

This memorandum will explain your municipality's next steps now that new legislative maps have been passed and signed into law: [Wisconsin 2023 Act 94](#).

Staff analysis of the new district lines show that **your municipality or county contains wards that have been split by assembly district lines**. These new wards require action by your governing body to approve the amended ward plan and the data with renamed wards must be submitted to the Legislative Technology Services Bureau so WEC can access the data and make required updates in WisVote.

Locations that have ward splits will need to have **temporary wards assigned until amended ward plans are finalized**. The smaller portion of wards split by assembly districts will be assigned a temporary label that contains the existing number and an "A" in the ward label. For example, if ward 12 is split into two assembly districts the larger will remain Ward 12 and the smaller will become Ward 12A. These updates will be implemented prior to April 15 to allow candidates and WEC staff to determine which voters are eligible to sign candidate nomination papers in circulation until June 3.

**Clerks should work with their local governing bodies to determine permanent ward labels and submit those through LTSB's GeoData Collector system by May 24**, so that WEC staff have time to work with the submitted dataset for implementation after the nomination paper filing deadline. WEC staff will then update WisVote with the permanent ward labels on June 4.

## **2. Webinar Information.**

**The rest of this communication will cover common questions on what county and municipal clerks should be completing between now and May 24.** WEC staff will hold a one-hour webinar on Tuesday, March 19 to review the contents of this memo and take questions. The Legislative Technology Services Bureau and Legislative Reference Bureau will also be available for questions.

**Topic:** *Redistricting Wards Split by Legislative Districts – Wisconsin 2023 Act 94*

**When:** Tuesday March 19, 2024: 9:30 – 10:30 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

*Wisconsin Elections Commissioners*

Ann S. Jacobs, chair | Marge Bostelmann | Julie M. Glancey | Dean Knudson | Robert Spindell | Mark L. Thomsen

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Administrator  
Meagan Wolfe

**Please click the link below to join the webinar:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83831321360?pwd=phHm5XKOeSGsG414qpOgn2iwmcXFpw.YFjy8TzbLaqGFvGs>

Passcode: 844550

### **3. Frequently Asked Questions.**

**a. Why do I have to create new wards?**

[Wis. Stat. § 5.15\(6\)\(a\)](#) dictates that “no ward line adjustment may cross the boundary of a congressional, assembly, or supervisory district.” [Wis. Stat. § 5.15\(4\)\(c\)](#) further authorizes the numbering of the new wards “with a combination of whole numbers and letters” that are created to effect wards created by the legislative redistricting process.

**b. How should wards be labeled?**

New wards created as part of the legislative redistricting process must be assigned either a whole number or combination of numbers and letters. WisVote staff recommend using the next sequential whole number. The numbers should not exceed three digits. For example, if you have 10 wards and Ward 7 was split, we suggest labeling one as Ward 7 and the other as the next available sequential number, Ward 11.

**c. What is required of the municipal and county clerks?**

Municipal clerks should work with county clerks and their GIS staff to obtain materials to facilitate the labeling or re-labeling of wards (Shape files are linked in this communication). Once approved by the municipal governing body, the ward shapes and labels should be updated in the Legislative Technology Services Bureau’s GeoData Collector system by county staff, who have access to this system. LTSB will then provide this information to WEC for implementation in WisVote.

**d. What is required of my governing body?**

[5.15\(4\)\(a\)](#) outlines that “. . . the municipal governing body shall no later than April 10 of the 2nd year following the year of the federal decennial census on which the act is based, amend the ordinance or resolution to the extent required to effect the act. The amended ordinance or resolution shall designate the polling place for any ward that is created to effect the legislative act. Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to compel a county or city to alter or redraw supervisory or aldermanic districts.” For the purposes of effecting the legislative maps, only the municipal governing body must amend the relevant ordinance or resolution at a meeting properly noticed according to Wis. Stat. § 19.84. County boards do not need to approve the creation of these wards. As we are well past the deadline of April 10, 2022, clerks should work with their governing bodies to pass this resolution as soon as possible.

**e. What is meant by “amend the ordinance or resolution to the extent required to effect the act”?**

WEC staff recommend conferring with your local counsel for interpretation, but there does appear to be flexibility in this statement that could allow a municipality to “effect the act” in ways that simplify election administration. For example, you must account for the new wards created because of the act, but it appears you may choose to re-label all of your wards, as long as only the geography of the split wards is adjusted. Additionally, “new wards” that are created with the same combination

of districts of an adjoining ward may be absorbed into the pre-existing ward or combined with like “sliver” wards, per your local counsel’s interpretation of [5.15\(4\)\(a\)](#).

**f. Who do I work with to review the new wards?**

Municipal clerks should work with county and GIS staff to assign new ward labels and create new ward shapefiles.

**g. How do I provide my updates to WEC?**

Once approved, data should be uploaded directly to LTSB’s GeoData Collector. Please note that submissions by counties must adhere to the normal standards outlined for GeoData Collector submissions. LTSB will provide this information to WEC for implementation in WisVote.

A list of likely impacted wards is attached to this communication titled [Assembly Senate Ward Splits 2023 WI Act 94](#). This information is provided for your reference and convenience, but please conduct your own analysis of the data as well. It may be helpful to refer to the written legal description of the districts listed at the top of this document in some cases where the ward maps no longer align perfectly with Census block data because of annexations that have occurred in the past few years.

Links to the Assembly and Senate GIS shapefiles are below, as well as the most recent available ward data. There are also interactive maps available to view the data.

**h. Please find the links to the datasets below:**

- [Assembly Districts – 2023 Wisconsin Act 94](#)
- [Senate Districts – 2023 Wisconsin Act 94](#)
- [Municipal Wards – 2024 January \(Most Recent Statewide Submission\)](#)
- [Census 2020 Wisconsin Blocks with 2023 Wisconsin Act 94 Legislative Districts](#)

**i. When should this be completed?**

Statute required the ordinance to be amended by April 10, 2022 per [Wis. Stat. § 5.15 \(4\)\(a\)](#). As we are past that deadline, ward update information should be updated in the GeoData Collector as soon as possible, but no later than May 24. WEC staff will complete the updates in WisVote for the permanent ward labels on June 4. This task should be completed by May 24 so that WEC staff can ensure voters and addresses are assigned to the correct wards and districts before absentee ballots are prepared for the 2024 Partisan Primary and so clerks can update their election plans as soon as possible.

If you have additional questions on what is required for WisVote, please contact the Wisconsin Elections Commission HelpDesk at [elections@wi.gov](mailto:elections@wi.gov) or call (608)261-2028.

If you have additional questions on how to use GeoData Collector, please contact the Legislative Technology Services Bureau at [GIS@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:GIS@legis.wisconsin.gov).

If you have additional questions on the statutory obligations of this process, please consult your local counsel who may consult with the Legislative Reference Bureau.