

Election 2026

Secretary of State Sarah Godlewski announces her bid to become Wisconsin's next lieutenant governor

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EYEING STATE

Area high school football teams enter season with lofty goals

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Federal Reserve

Trump demands Fed governor's resignation over alleged mortgage fraud

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National Guard

Vance, Hegseth visit with troops at Washington's main train station

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Thursday, August 21, 2025

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MADISON | LEADERSHIP

New city clerk appointed

McComas officially begins on Sept. 29

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Four months after Madison's embattled city clerk resigned in the wake of nearly 200 uncounted ballots cast in the city's November 2024 election, Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway has appointed the city's next top election official.

Lydia McComas, who previously served as voter engagement division manager with Hennepin County in Minnesota, will officially take on the new role on Sept. 29, according to the mayor's office.

McComas said in a statement she plans to "work every day to uphold the values of accountability, accuracy, and accessibility that are essential to this office."

McComas comes to the clerk's office just days after the Wisconsin Elections Commission ordered the city to pursue changes to how it tracks, processes and maintains absentee ballots, including updated pre-election procedures, new polling place practices, and updates to the post-election and reconciliation process.

The new policies, which the bipartisan agency ordered despite concerns raised by the city's

acting clerk over whether the agency has the power to enforce the new rules, come after a commission-led probe found a "confluence of errors" and "complete lack of leadership" in the clerk's office — led at the time by City Clerk Maribeth Witzel-Behl — resulted in 193 absentee ballots going uncounted.

A week after the election, the city clerk's office found the first set of uncounted ballots, 67 of

them from Ward 65 and one from Ward 68, but waited until Dec. 18 to alert the commission. Several weeks later, the clerk's office found the other 125 uncounted ballots, from Ward 56, in sealed absentee carrier envelopes while going through the reconciliation process to compare ballot counts and determine voter participation.

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UW-MILWAUKEE | 2 BRANCH CAMPUSES CLOSED



JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL

Street signs on the campus of UW-Milwaukee at Washington County greet visitors to the campus in West Bend. The 200,000-square-foot campus building sits on 80 acres that the county maintains, and Ozaukee Christian School has emerged as the site's top buyer.

Proposed revivals emerge

SABINE MARTIN smartin@madison.com

The future of UW-Milwaukee's branch campuses that shuttered in the last two years is coming into focus.

After the closure of the university's two-year branch campuses in Washington and Waukesha counties, in 2024 and this June, respectively, one of the proper-

ties last week gained a potential buyer, and the other has several interested developers.

The Universities of Wisconsin has attributed the closure of the two branch campuses — among six total closures since 2023 — to plummeting enrollment.

UW-Milwaukee at Washington County saw a 55% drop in enrollment since 2018. The

Waukesha branch campus followed the same trend, reporting steep enrollment declines, including a 65% drop since 2014.

UW-Oshkosh most recently announced this June it's shutting down its Fox Cities branch campus in Menasha.

School makes offer

Ozaukee Christian School has

emerged as UW-Milwaukee at Washington's top buyer.

The 200,000-square-foot campus building sits on an 80-acre property that the county maintains. The county has 74% ownership of the campus and West Bend has 26%.

Please see UW-MILWAUKEE, Page A6

ELECTION 2026 REDISTRICTING

Texas House OKs its new map

JIM VERTUNO and NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas Republicans on Wednesday took the first step toward approving new congressional maps that would give their party as many as five new seats in the House of Representatives, spurring what's likely to be a national battle over redistricting.

The approval by the Texas House of Representatives came at the urging of President Donald Trump, who pushed for the extraordinary mid-decade revision of congressional maps to give his party a better chance at holding onto the U.S. House of Representatives in the 2026 midterm elections. The maps need to be approved by the GOP-controlled state Senate and signed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott before they become official.

But the Texas House presented the best chance for Democrats to derail the redraw.

Texas state legislative Democrats delayed the vote by two weeks by fleeing the state earlier this month in protest, and were assigned round-the-clock police monitoring upon their return to ensure they attended Wednesday's session.

The approval of the Texas maps on an 88-52 party-line vote is likely to prompt California's Democratic-controlled state Legislature last week to approve of a new House map creating five new Democratic-leaning districts.

Please see TEXAS, Page A2

GOP demands action from Canada on wildfires

TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

The sternly worded statements and letters are filled with indignation and outrage: Republican U.S. lawmakers say Canada has done too little to contain wildfires and smoke that have fouled

the air in several states this summer.

"Instead of enjoying family vacations at Michigan's beautiful lakes and campgrounds, for the third summer in a row, Michiganders are forced to breathe hazardous air as a result of Canada's failure to prevent

and control wildfires," read a recent statement from the state's GOP congressional delegation, echoing similar missives from Republicans in Iowa, New York, North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

They've demanded more forest thinning, prescribed burns

and other measures to prevent fires from starting. They've warned the smoke is hurting relations between the countries and suggested the U.S. could make it an issue in tariff talks.

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