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## **NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Wisconsin Department of Justice Is Working To Protect Fair Elections**

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) today is issuing a reminder that voter intimidation and threats to election workers are against the law, and that federal law generally prohibits federal officials from ordering military or armed personnel to active polling places.

“Every eligible voter should be able to vote freely and safely,” said AG Kaul. “The Wisconsin Department of Justice is fully committed to helping ensure that Wisconsin once again has a fair and secure election.”

DOJ’s Division of Criminal Investigation staffs the Wisconsin State Intelligence Center (WSIC). WSIC facilitates intelligence and information sharing with federal, state, local, tribal, and campus law enforcement partners along with fire service, emergency management, public health, military, and private sector agencies.

WSIC shares on an ongoing basis intelligence on potential threats with local law enforcement and elections administrators across Wisconsin and will continue to do so through Election Day. WSIC works closely with their partners to gather, receive, analyze, and disseminate intelligence about various types of threats to Wisconsin elections, including but not limited to threats against election administrators or of election interference, foreign or domestic.

Wisconsin DOJ is available as a resource to the Wisconsin Elections Commission, law enforcement, and district attorneys. Wisconsin DOJ will be communicating with law enforcement and prosecutors regarding relevant election laws.

## **Voter Intimidation & Threats to Election Officials**

Voter intimidation is a crime. Wisconsin law prohibits anyone from using or threatening force to compel someone to vote, to keep them from voting, or to influence their voting decision. Wisconsin law also prohibits anyone from using duress or fraud to impede or prevent someone from freely exercising their right to vote.

Threatening behavior toward election officials is also a crime. Wisconsin law prohibits anyone from threatening death or bodily harm intending to cause, or creating an unreasonable and substantial risk of causing, public panic or fear, or the interruption or impairment of government operations, including the electoral process.

Wisconsin law also prohibits anyone from refusing to obey a lawful order of a polling place inspector, engaging in disorderly behavior at or near a polling place, or interrupting or disturbing voting or canvassing proceedings.

The law not only prohibits individuals from taking any of these actions personally, but it also prohibits individuals from having a third party take these actions.

Unlawful intimidation can take many forms and determining if any particular action is criminal is dependent on the facts of the incident. Examples could include:

- Verbal threats of violence.
- Confronting voters or election officials while wearing military-style or official looking uniforms.
- Brandishing or displaying firearms in an intimidating or threatening manner in or near a polling place.
- Aggressively approaching voters' cars or writing down license plate numbers.
- Following voters to, from, or within polling places.
- Appearing to patrol or police the voting line while armed.
- Engaging in disorderly behavior in or near a polling place.
- Preventing access to a polling place by making threats or engaging in intimidating behavior.

Additionally, it is illegal under state and federal law for private groups to conduct law enforcement or military activities.

## **Deployment of Military or Armed Federal Personnel**

Federal law generally prohibits federal officials from ordering the military or armed personnel to active polling places except when "necessary to repel armed enemies of

the United States.” Federal personnel are also specifically prohibited from interfering with the right to vote.

### **What to do if you witness voter intimidation or threats to election workers**

If you witness or are subject to election intimidation or threats, alert an election official and call local law enforcement immediately. If you are being threatened with violence, call 911.