



DAVE MAXEY

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 83RD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

August 21, 2026

Paulina Gutiérrez
Executive Director, City of Milwaukee Election Commission
200 E. Wells Street, Room 501
Milwaukee, WI 53202

cc: George Christenson, Milwaukee County Clerk

RE: Formal Request for Answers and Accountability Following the August 11-12, 2026 Central Count Error

Dear Director Gutiérrez,

I am writing as Chair of the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections to demand a full, public accounting of what happened at Milwaukee's central count facility on the night of August 11 into the early morning of August 12, 2026. This was a travesty, plain and simple, and voters deserve to know exactly why.

According to reporting, city staff left the facility without exporting results from five of nine tabulators, requiring a police-escorted return trip and delaying Milwaukee's results by roughly 90 minutes while the entire country watched the outcome of a statewide primary hang on your office getting the basics right. This is unfortunately not an isolated incident. It is the third significant central count failure in recent election cycles: a flash drive left behind in 2020, unlocked tabulator doors that forced a 31,000-ballot recount in 2024, and now a failed export process in 2026. Three strikes is not bad luck, but rather a pattern of mismanagement, and every time it happens, your office hands a gift to the very people trying to convince Wisconsinites their votes don't count.

Milwaukee runs the largest central count operation in this state, and one of the most scrutinized in the country. That is precisely why there is no excuse for repeatedly getting the fundamentals wrong. A checklist created after your predecessor's own mistake in 2020 was apparently not followed in 2026. That is a failure of leadership, training, and oversight on your watch, and Wisconsin voters, Republican and Democrat alike, deserve an election system they can trust without having to hold their breath every cycle.

To that end, I am requesting written answers to the following questions:

1. What exactly happened on the night of August 11? Please provide a step-by-step, timestamped account of the error, from the decision to leave the facility to the discovery that five tabulators had not been exported.
2. How did this happen? Your office has maintained a checklist since 2020, specifically created after a similar failure, that calls for a single official to extract results from each tabulator while accompanied by other staff. Was that checklist followed on August 11? If not, at what step did the process break down, and who was responsible for enforcing it?



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3. How many similar errors have occurred at Milwaukee's central count operation in the last ten years? Please provide a full list, including the 2020 and 2024 incidents, with a description of what corrective action was taken after each one and why those corrective actions failed to prevent this one.
4. Was this a training failure? A former city election director has publicly suggested this looks like a training issue. Were the staff who mishandled the five tabulators fully trained and certified on export procedures? What training or supervision changes will you implement before the next election?
5. Which municipalities' ballots pass through your central count facility, and in what volume? Please break this down by municipality for the August 2026 primary.
6. Would isolating Milwaukee-specific ballots, or processing by smaller batches, reduce the risk of an error like this one? If not, why not, and what alternative would?
7. Given the recurring nature of these failures, do you support an independent, outside review of Milwaukee's central count procedures, including referral to appropriate investigative authorities such as the Wisconsin Elections Commission or, if warranted, the FBI, to ensure the public has full confidence in the findings?
8. What can the State of Wisconsin do to help you get this right? If additional resources, equipment, staffing, or statutory changes would meaningfully reduce the risk of future errors, I want specifics, not generalities, so this Committee can act on them.

I recognize your office has stated there is no evidence the results were compromised, and I take that seriously. But trust in our elections is not built on the absence of fraud alone. It is built on competence, consistency, and transparency, and Milwaukee's central count operation has now failed that test three times. This Committee will not simply accept apologies after the fact while the same mistakes keep happening on a two-year cycle.

I am requesting a written response within 30 days of this letter. I am also requesting that your office make itself available to brief the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections directly, on the record. Milwaukee has had three election cycles and three failures to get this right. A fourth will not be treated as an accident.

If you cannot correct these mistakes and finally give Milwaukee voters an election operation they can count on, then I believe you should resign.

Sincerely,

Dave Maxey
State Representative
Chair, Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections