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SPORTS, 1D

WAUSAU DAILY HERALD

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Todd VanveHed prepares orders at the Antigo Area Community Food Pantry in Antigo.

PHOTOS BY TORK MASON/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Taking a look at the voting issues GOP election review is focused on

Patrick Marley Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

MADISON - After a fitful start, the partisan review of Wisconsin's presidential election is starting to get off the ground.

Its precise scope and timing remain unclear.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos of Rochester this summer hired former state Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman to examine the 2020 election. Gableman, who last year baselessly claimed the election was stolen, was to complete his work by the end of October but recently said he needs more time.

Joe Biden beat Donald Trump in Wisconsin by more than 20,000 votes, or 0.6 points. Vos and Gableman have said they won't try to overturn the results, acknowledging they have been upheld by recounts and court rulings.

Instead, they have said they want to identify ways to improve election processes so they can propose new legislation. Any plans they develop could be stopped by Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, who in recent months vetoed a string of Republican election bills that he argued would have made it harder to vote.

Vos gave Gableman a \$676,000 taxpayer-funded budget to cover costs through December. Gableman and Vos would need to reach a new contract — and possibly a larger budget — if Gableman's work continues into next year.

Gableman has not spelled out his precise plans but has said he's looking at three main issues. Here's a look at what's known about his review and how it got started.

Grants to cities

Gableman has put the bulk of his energy into reviewing \$8.8 million in grants the state's five largest cities received from the Center for Tech and Civic Life to help run their elections during the coronavirus pandemic. Republicans have expressed frustration with the grants because they helped turnout in cities with large Democratic populations.

The center — which was funded by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan — gave smaller donations to about 200 other Wisconsin communities, including many that are home to large numbers of Republicans. Gableman has given no indication he plans to look into those grants.

Courts have concluded there are no

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Rural pantry managers face unique struggles in getting food to those in need

Renee Hickman Wausau Daily Herald | USA TODAY NETWORK - WISCONSIN

WAUSAU - Although there are many food pantries scattered throughout Wisconsin's counties, food insecurity in the state's rural population can be particularly hard to address. • Often living far away from the nearest food pantry, food insecure Wisconsinites in the state's rural communities may face issues with transportation, logistics and timing when trying to access available food assistance. • These obstacles compound the fact that the state's rural residents are among the most food insecure, with particular issues facing children.



Bob Meyer stocks a refrigerator at the Antigo Area Community Food Pantry in Antigo.

For 2021, Feeding America, Inc. a national non-profit food pantry network, projected an overall food insecurity rate of 10.4% in Wisconsin, and a projected food insecurity rate for children of 16.2%.

In largely rural Langlade County, which has a population of 19,146, the food insecurity rate calculated by Feeding America, Inc. is 10.8% overall, but 18.6% for children.

Rachael Bolen, Antigo Area Community Food Pantry's director, says the pantry covers the whole county, and getting to food assistance to the people who need it in the county's rural regions can be a problem.

For clients who don't have access to a car themselves, the only option is usually to arrange transportation with someone they know or to arrange for a proxy to pick up their food.

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Stock the Shelves is an annual campaign by the USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin in partnership with Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin that encourages readers to donate money to help fight hunger in their local communities.

Since 2010, Stock the Shelves has raised more than \$5 million for food pantries across Wisconsin thanks to the donations of readers and support of community partners, including credit unions.

The money raised provided about half a million meals to those in need in our communities.

Stock the Shelves aims to help those in need in the communities served by the following Northeastern Wisconsin newspapers: Door County Advocate, Green Bay Press-Gazette, Oconto County Reporter, Kewaunee County Star-News, Appleton Post-Crescent, Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter, Oshkosh Northwestern, Fond du Lac Reporter, Sheboygan Press, Wausau Daily Herald, Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune, Marshfield News-Herald, Stevens Point Journal, and Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Donations will help support the community in which the donor resides.

Checks should be made payable to Feeding American Eastern Wisconsin, ATTN: Stock the Shelves, and mail to 2911 W. Evergreen Drive, Appleton WI 54913. Enclose alongside your contribution the donor's address with city, state and ZIP code for internal processing, a notation of whether or not the donation should remain anonymous, whether the donation is in the memory of someone special, and the donor's name as it should appear in the thank-you advertisement to be published in the Thanksgiving edition of USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin's daily newspapers.

To donate online, visit feedingamericawi.org/stocktheshelvesdonate.



Mary Rasmussen prepares orders at the Antigo Area Community Food Pantry in Antigo.

TORK MASON/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN

Pantry

Continued from Page 1A

The pantry, which is staffed by volunteers, is not equipped to do deliveries, she says.

So, she and her volunteers try their best to work with clients to help them arrange transportation, or a proxy who can go to Antigo, a town of 8,234 and the county seat of Langlade County, to pick up their food.

This is particularly important, she says, because there are few public transportation options in the state's rural areas, and many of the food recipients are senior citizens who may be unable to drive themselves, or others who do not have access to a car.

But for people who are unable to get a ride or a proxy, Bolen has worries.

"I think there is a part of the popula-

tion that we do miss because they aren't able to get here," she said. "We've tried to troubleshoot that as best we can," says Bolen.

"The proxy does help," she says. "But there are people that face that issue as well, that they don't have anybody that can come pick up (food) for them."

In Plover, a village of just over 12,000 people in Portage County, the Interfaith Community Food Pantry of Portage County faces similar issues.

Like the Antigo pantry, the Plover pantry serves an entire county of people, meaning some are nearby and able to walk, bike or take a bus if they are not able to drive themselves to the pantry.

But others, said Melvin Dow, the director of operations for the pantry, don't have that ability, and are located far away.

"We do have families that come from 20, 30 miles away," he said.

The pantry, which is 22 years old, is unusual in the region because it only operates in the evening — 5 to 8 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month.

Dow said that's one thing the pantry does to try to reach more people, including those who might only have access to transportation after regular business hours, if for example, a family member or friend who works during the day needs to drive them.

That's also important, says Dow, because people who need help but are working during the day often cannot take time off from work just to pick up food.

He also has clients who live in more remote areas of the county that cannot arrange for transportation or a proxy. In those cases, or in emergencies, Dow says, he sometimes finds himself making the deliveries himself.

But he says, "you just can't do that all the time because it's so time consuming and we're covering such a distance."

Al Crevier, the co-manager of Community Food Pantry of the Greater Merrill Area in Merrill, the county seat of Lincoln County, says their clients in the mostly rural county also run into this problem at times, as they don't typically make deliveries either.

To prevent them falling through the cracks he says, the pantry is able to work with Lincoln County Social Ser-

vices to contract with people who can make the deliveries or provide transportation to clients who otherwise cannot access the food.

Bolen says however, that aside from transportation, one of the issues she has been encountering in her community, is people who are dealing with the dual challenges of food insecurity and being unhoused.

In rural communities, unhoused populations are often less visible than in urban communities, where more public spaces are provided that those populations can have access to.

In rural areas however, a person experiencing homelessness is more likely to be staying temporarily with friends, family and other acquaintances, which can make it harder to find them and let them know what food assistance is available to them.

She is currently working with her staff on ways to expand outreach on social media platforms like Facebook in places where a physical poster or flier won't be as likely to be seen by a person who needs assistance.

Both Crevier and Bolen said that during the pandemic, they actually saw the use of their services go down somewhat despite the pressures on the economy and layoffs that many people experienced, a change they attribute to government aid like increased unemployment benefits and holds on evictions.

"We believe government aid during COVID times has brought much relief to struggling families," says Crevier.

But, Bolen says, now that some of that relief has ended, such as the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, which ceased in September, she is beginning to see demand at her pantry begin to rise again and she is looking for more ways to help rural families who are finding themselves vulnerable once again.

Renee Hickman is a Report For America corps member based at the Wausau Daily Herald covering rural issues in Wisconsin. Contact at rhickman@gannett.com or follow her on Twitter at @ReneeNHickman. Please consider supporting journalism that informs our democracy with a tax-deductible gift to this reporting effort at WausauDailyHerald.com/RFA.



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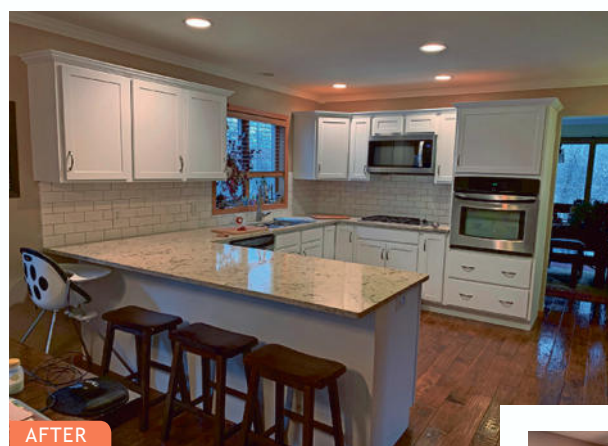
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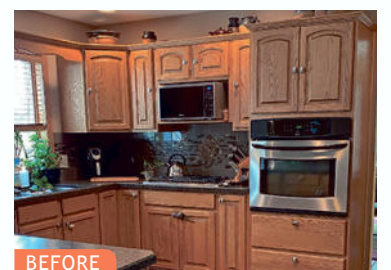
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