INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE
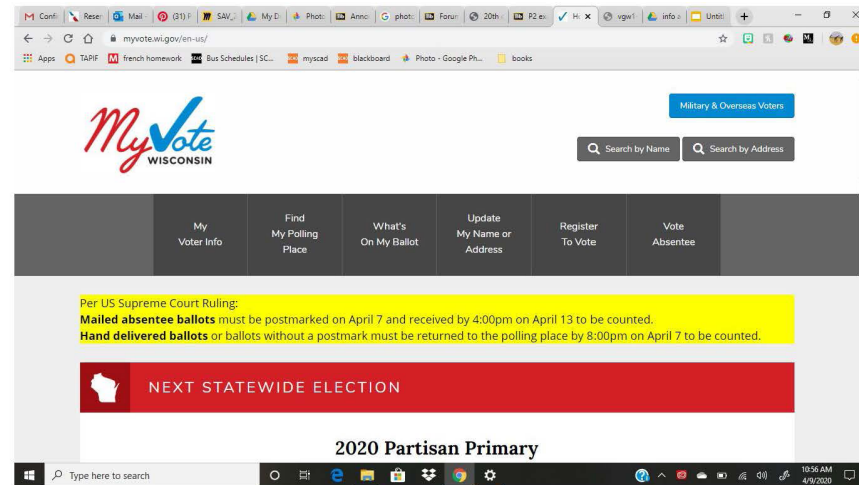
## Wisconsin Voter Website

myvote.wi.gov

I decided to analyse myvote.wi.gov, because I think it is the right size for this class, and I am genuinely interested in how they organize this information and how my test subjects will be able to navigate it.

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Scrolling down reveals quick info about the next upcoming election, and icons linking to the same pages from the main bar above. These are in blue, catching attention of anyone who has scrolled past the main bar at the top.

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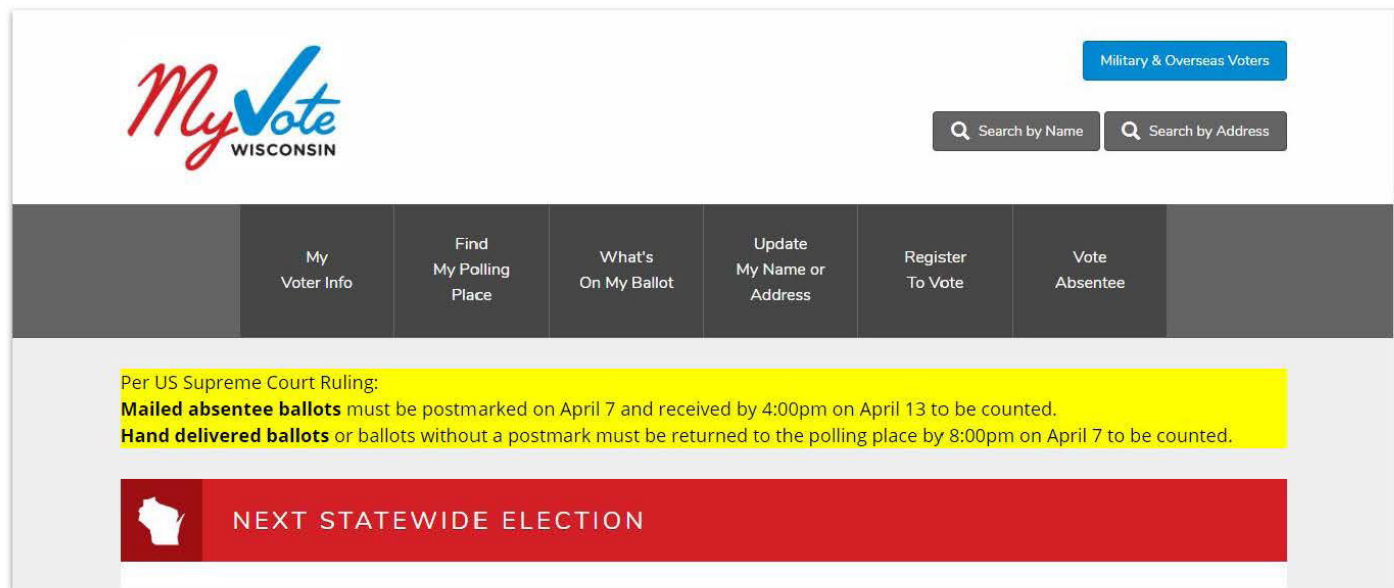
Primary color scheme, main bar includes the six main website functions. Main bar is dark gray to contrast from rest of site. Quick links to search for address or name are also the same gray, creating a visual hierarchy by color.
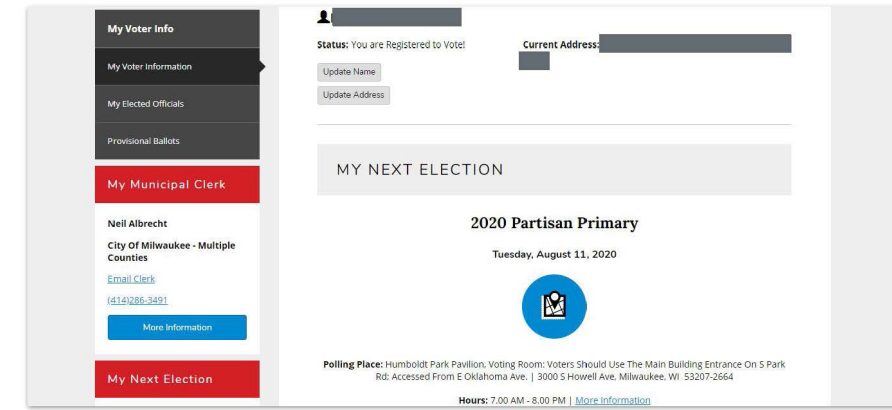
6
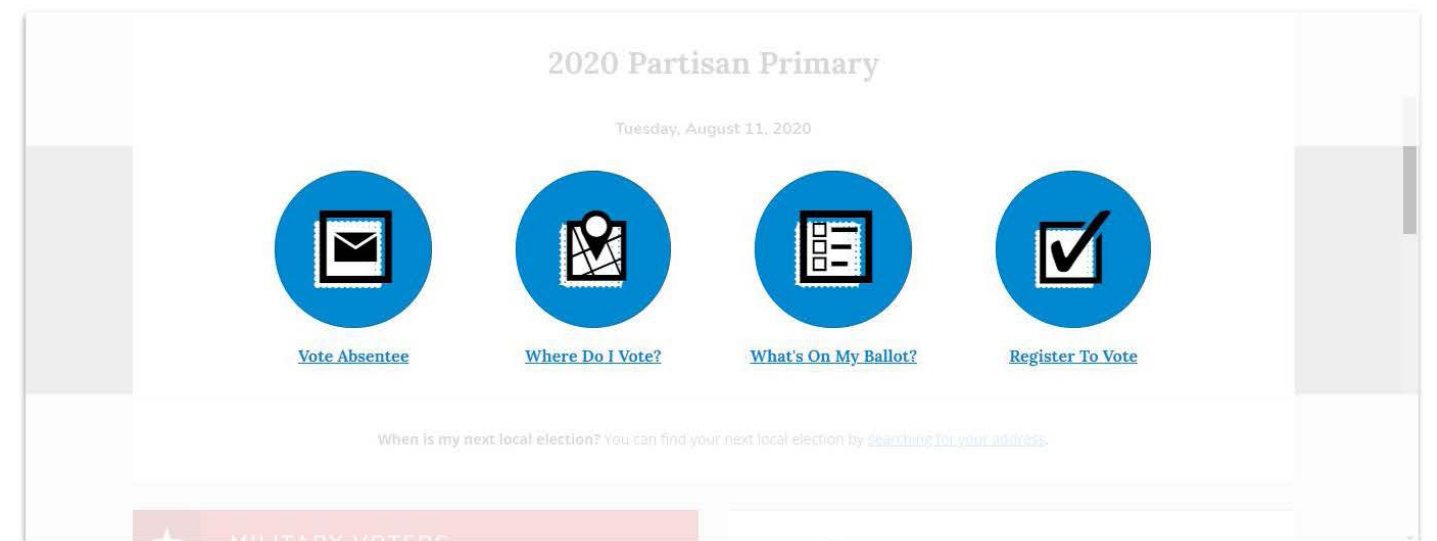
These icons that appear as you scroll down link to the same subcategories as the main bar at the top, simply worded differently and with an image icon. I wonder why the duplication, and why these more eye-catching icons were not used as the main bar instead.
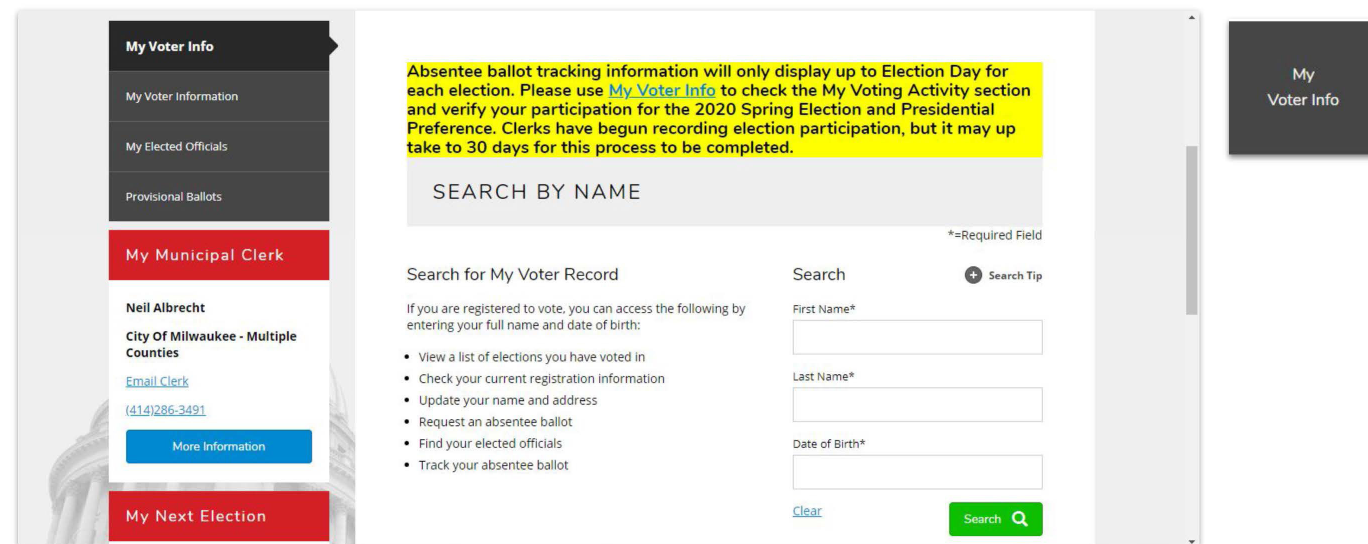
9
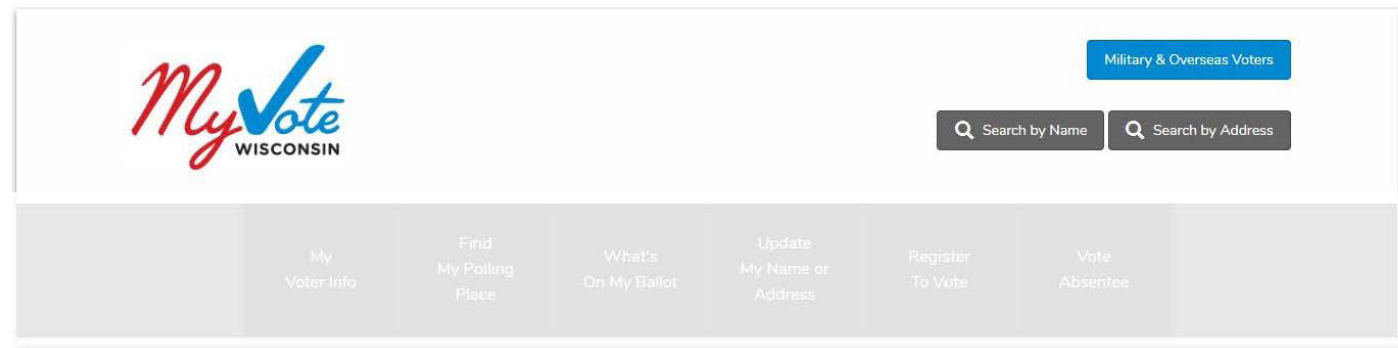
At the top are quick links to search by address or name, and one for military and overseas voters. I found these confusing at first because it only says how I am searching, not what I am searching for. On further investigation, it takes me to My Voter Info, showing my information like registration status, address, and next election. Searching by address takes me to My Polling Place. While I appreciate the quick search tool, it seems redundant when the links to those pages are right beneath them, and also confusing since it doesn't say what information you're searching for. Military and Overseas Voters is a useful link as it leads to a page directing these voters to information on registering and requesting ballots, although I do wonder why the wasn't included in the main header.

My Voter Info leads to a Search by Name form, which I expected to retrieve my registration status. There are also tabs on the side that I expected to lead to different pages, but they just linked back to this form.
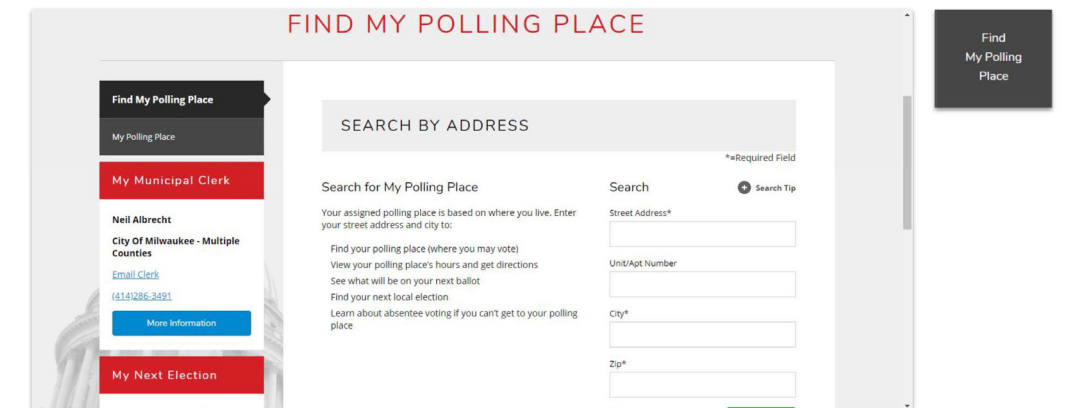
I was right about it showing my registration status, but it also came back with my current address, information about my next election, as well as my past voter record. The tabs on the side now link to real pages, just content about my elected officials and provisional ballots.

Find My Polling Place led me to a Search By Address Form, something I think almost all pages are going to lead to. I should note that after entering my information on one page, I am not asked to do it again on other pages, for the purposes of this project I am simply re opening the website to see how a first time user experiences it. The My Polling Place tab seems unnecessary as clicking it links back to this form, and filling out the form brings me to that tab.
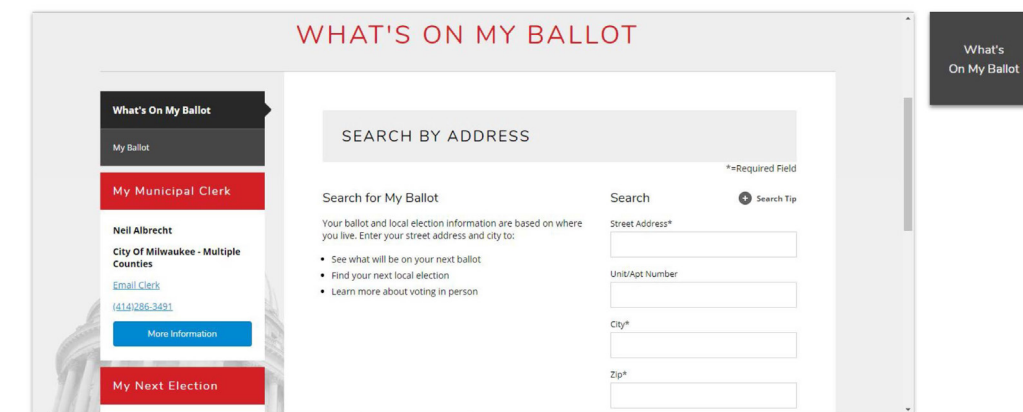
A search by address form! Another unnecessary tab! I would expect that this form would then show you what is on the next ballot, however at the moment the next election is too far away for there to be any information posted.

UPDATE MY NAME OR ADDRESS
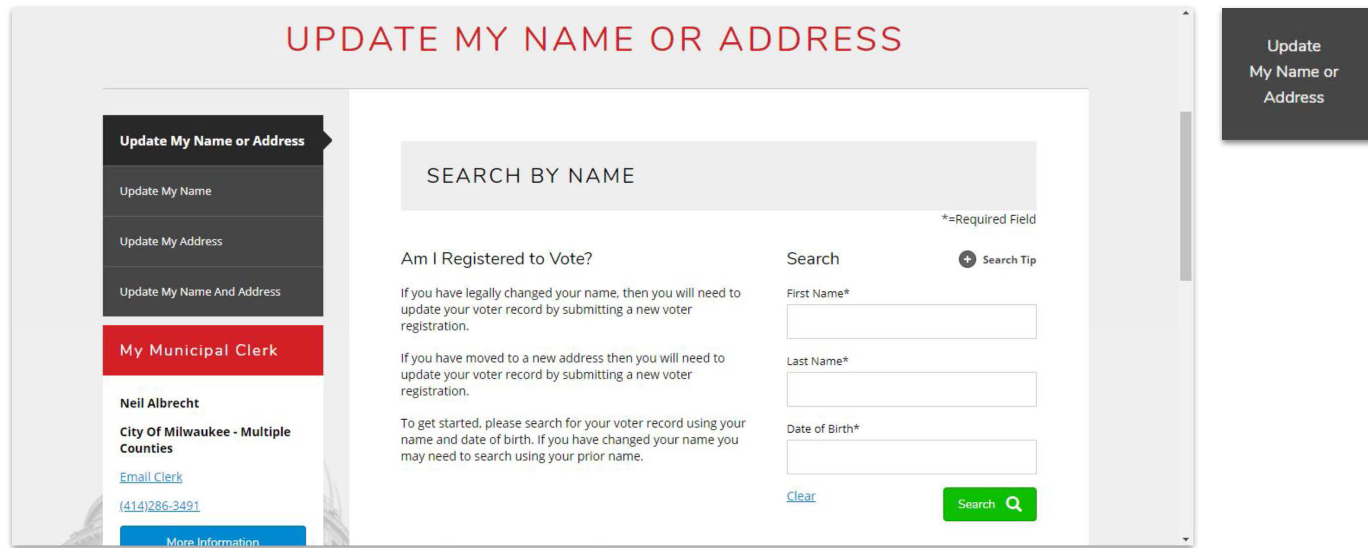
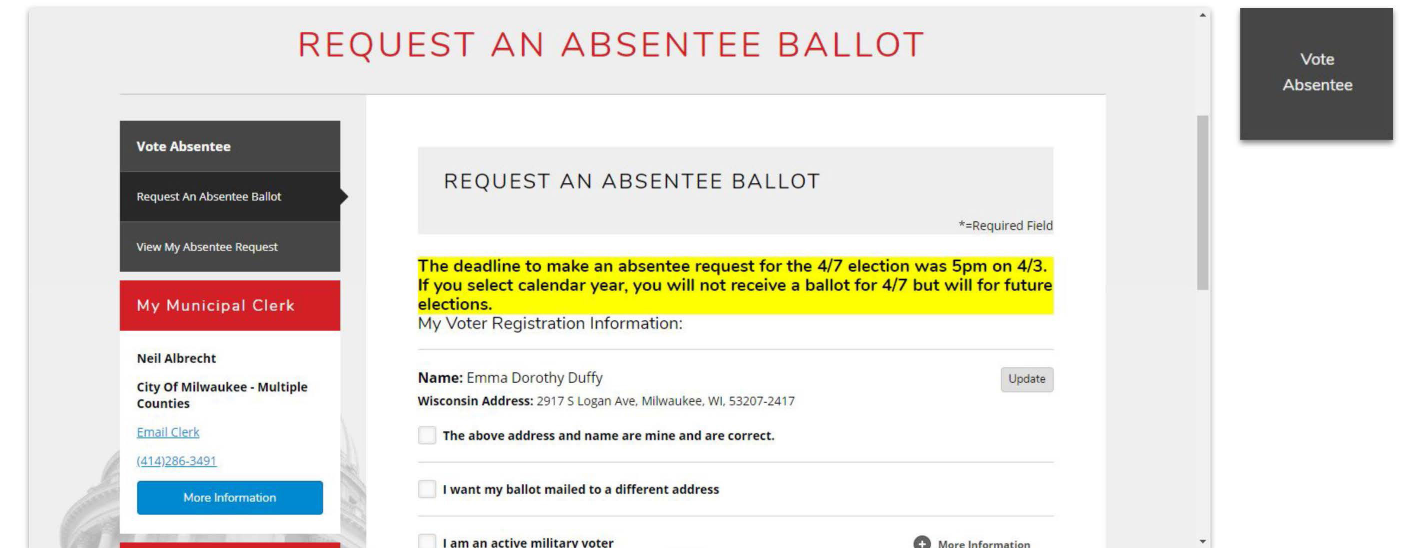I expected Update My Name or Address to begin with a search by address form, and after going through this takes you through the steps to do so. However I did not expect those tabs on the left because again they simply link back to this page and feel completely redundant.

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REQUEST AN ABSENTEE BALLOT

Vote Absentee also took me to a Search by Name form, however what was counterintuitive is that after finding your registration status, the button to request a ballot simply takes you to the second tab on the left, making me wonder why the tabs are necessary.

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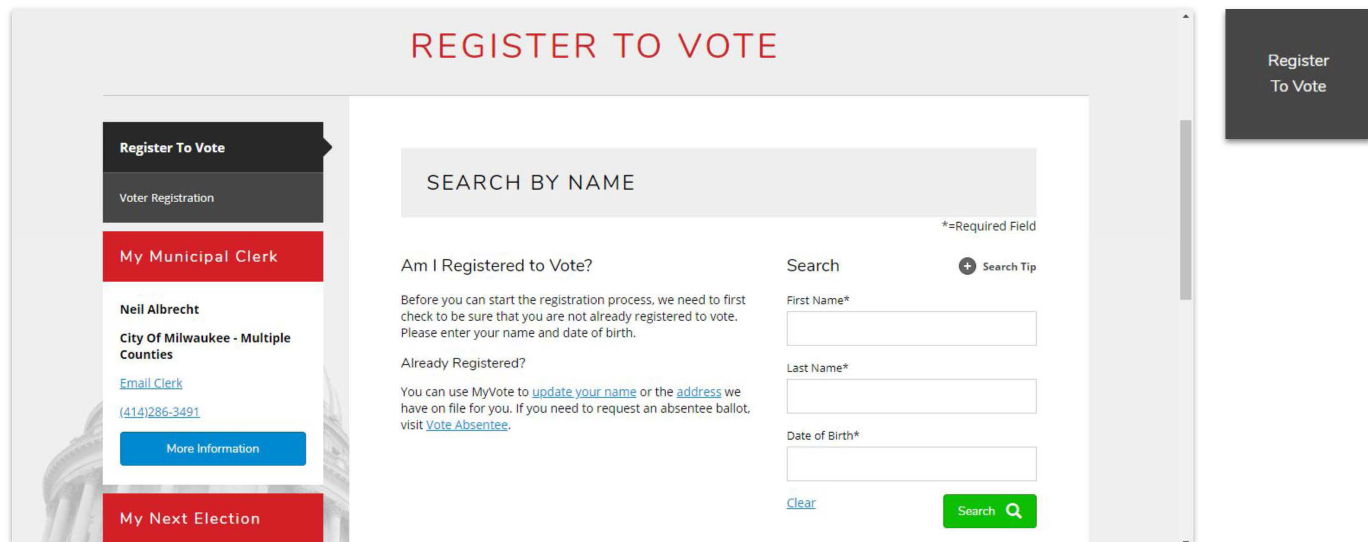
REGISTER TO VOTE

Register To Vote takes you unsurprisingly to a Search by Name form, which brings back your registration status and current address. One thing that did surprise me is that Voter Registration on the left does not take you to registration status but to a form for registering to vote, even after I'd already entered my information in the site.

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MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS
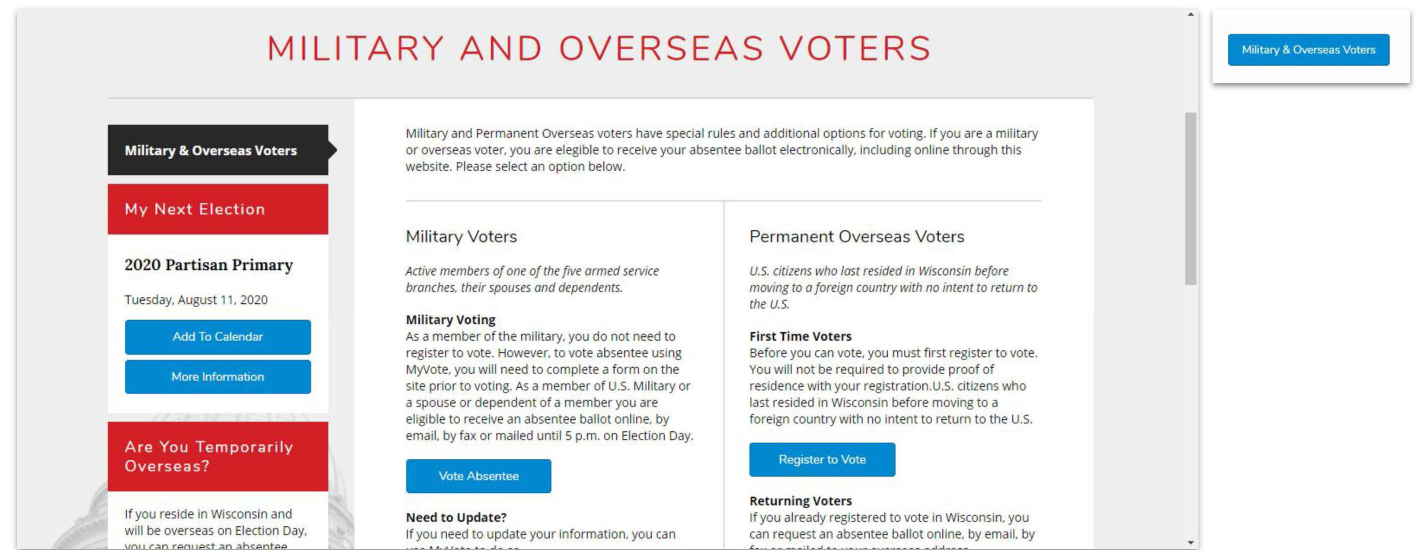
When I clicked Military and Overseas Voters, I expected it to take me to an informational page, and I was correct, though it was very quick information. However I did notice that the subcategories on this page simply link to the corresponding top levels, when the existence of a special Military and Overseas Voters button had led me to believe there were different processes for these individuals.

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My User Testing Process

To conduct user testing of the website virtually, I used Miro, a virtual whiteboard application.

I presented each tester with all of the top levels in pink notes, randomly in a row. Then on the left I gave them every subcategory, form, content header, pop up, and outside link that appears on any page. I asked them to imagine they were going through each process on the website, and lay out the cards in an order that made logical sense to them.

I included duplicates of every note, and told them they could use as many as they wanted or none at all.
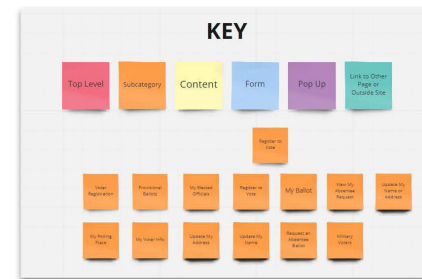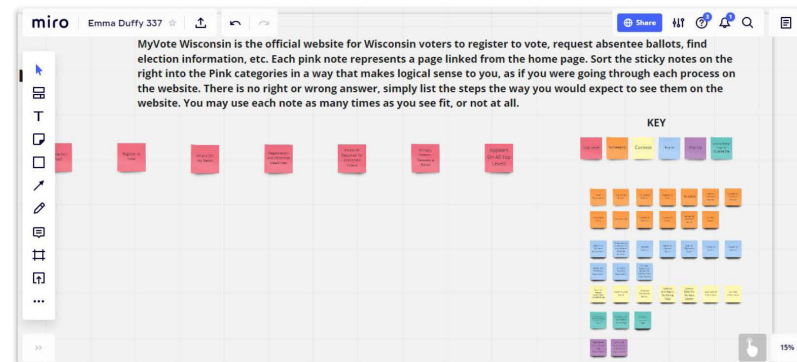
I also included a pink note for things the tester thought should appear on every page, and a blank Link note for them to fill in if they thought a process should link to a different page.

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Results
Thomas

Thomas approached this by going through and fully completed a top level before moving on to the next. In doing this he didn't realize that some of the top levels were duplicates, and what was fascinating is he actually created different layouts for the same process. He said that the slightly different wording may have influenced him, but also that as went on he felt more pressured to use cards he hadn't included yet He felt that his second layout for each was the one he was most confident with.

Thomas: 52, Consistently registered voter, has used the site once recently to request an absentee ballot. Should be noted he works as a data specialist and has a lot of experience with card sorting and information architecture.


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Results
Dylan

Dylan went in order of color, placing all the orange notes first, then blue, then beige, and so on. Because of that he noticed right away the duplicate top levels
He seemed to be influenced by the organization of the cards, kept them in that order although I clarified he didn't need to.
His layouts were very linear, did not include any branching pathways.
He also thinks there are too many top levels, and that Military and Overseas shouldn't be its own top level but rather a subcategory underneath pages such as Register to Vote
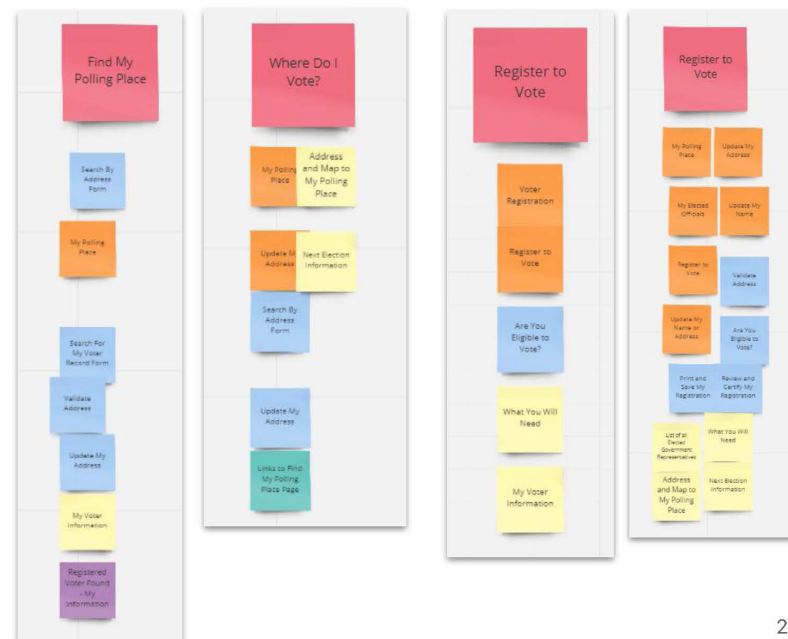
Dylan: 15, has never voted or visited the website.
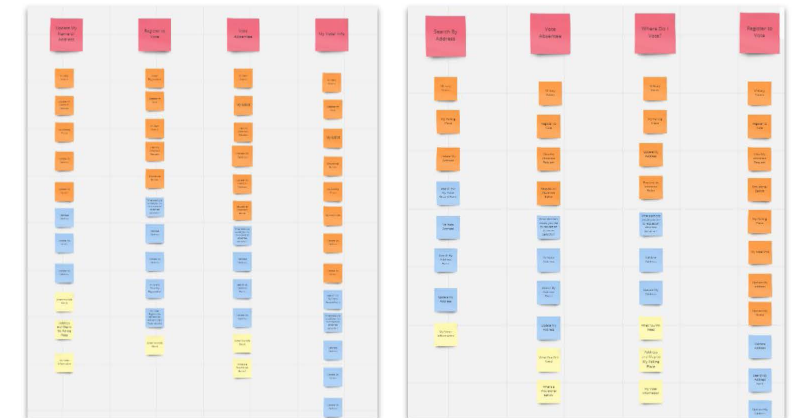
Interesting idea: he placed the pop ups under Appears On All Pages, saying once you've entered your information that confirmation should appear on all pages

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Results
Merci

Merci took a lot more time to consider everything and make decisions carefully.

Like Thomas, Merci also fleshed out a full top level at a time, but she used cards very sparingly, only a few for each top level. Additionally, she left many top levels blank as she felt they shouldn't be on the site
For example, she didn't think Provisional Ballots should be on the website because that is a process you do in person on election day, I think her knowledge as a poll worker definitely gave her a different perspective on the information necessary to the site.

Merci: 54, consistently registered voter, has used the site multiple times to find polling places and request absentee ballots. Should also be noted that she has been a Wisconsin poll worker for the last four years.

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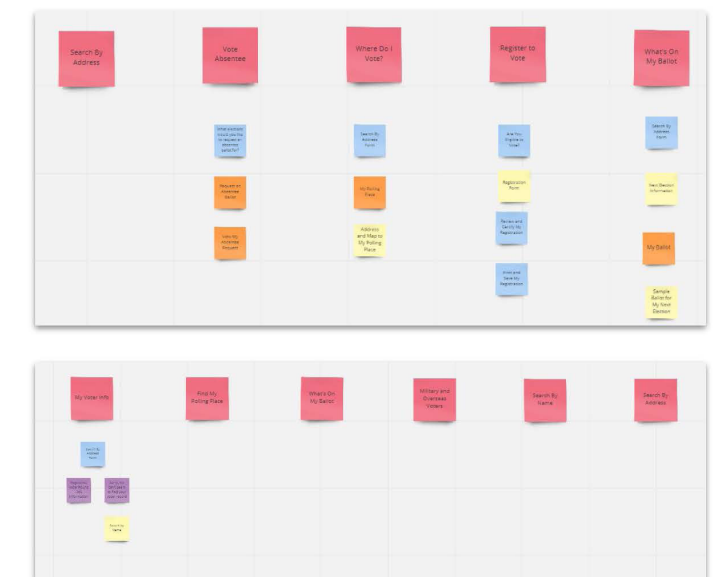
General Takeaways from Testing

- All participants seemed to agree that the site could be simpler, none of them came close to the level of complexity that the actual site has.
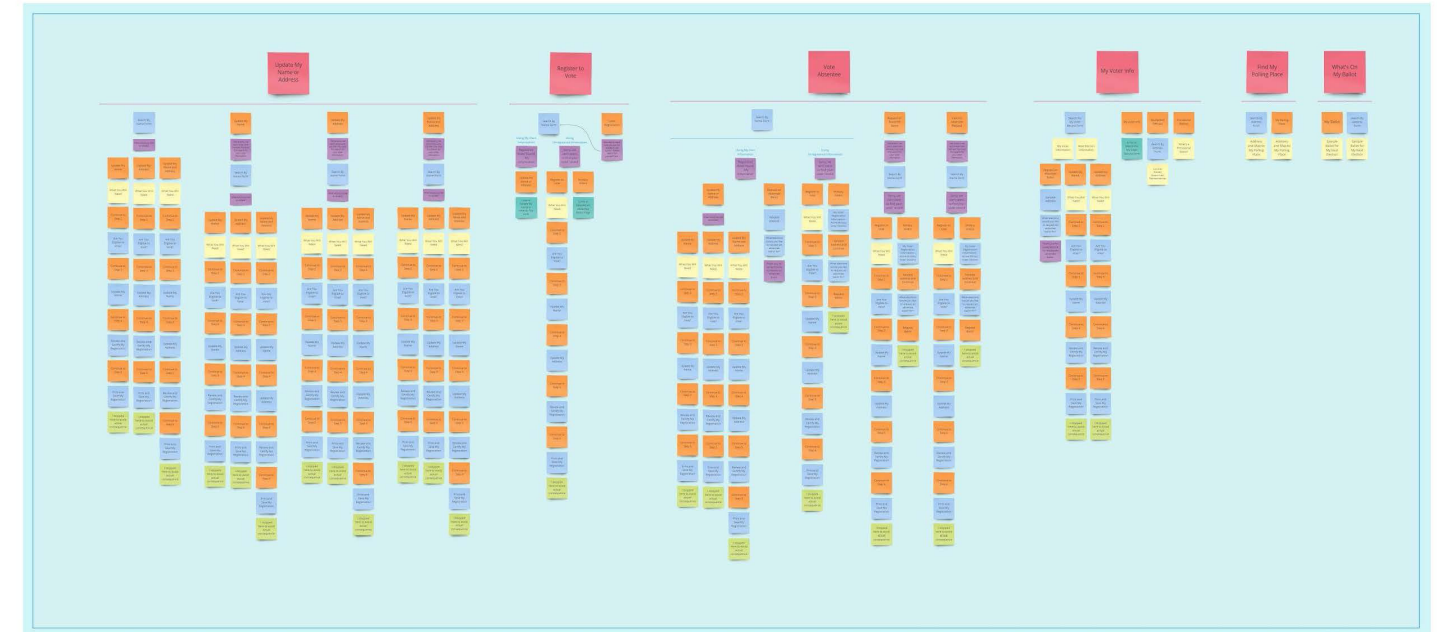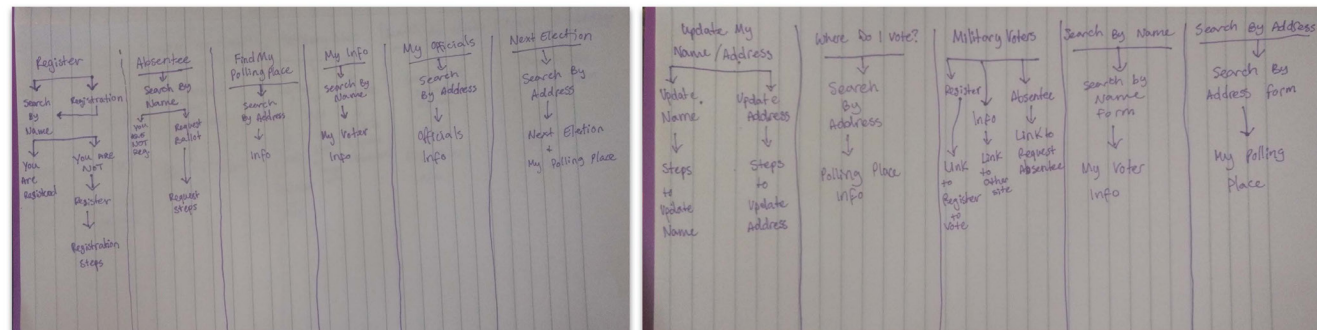- However it should be noted that the processes on this site are complex legal processes, and so do require more steps than the average person might think of in a simple card sort.
- The participants definitely all agreed that there were too many duplicate top levels, and that is something that could be easily simplified.

Top Levels from the main header.

Since I'd already begun analysing the site structure of the website, instead of mapping out my expectations, what I've done instead is tested myself to draw the site map on paper from memory, and see which things I may have forgotten. I believe that should give me an interesting idea for what parts of the site I think are important enough to remember. Here's the top levels I forgot: **What's On My Ballot, Registration Deadlines, Photo ID Requirements,** and **Find My Clerk**. I also remembered 'Next Election Info' as being one of the main buttons on the home page when it is not. I also greatly simplified the processes, even though I was detailing as best as I could remember.
This tells me that maybe I should look into ways some of these processes could be simplified, and also maybe rethink which pages are highlighted on the home page.
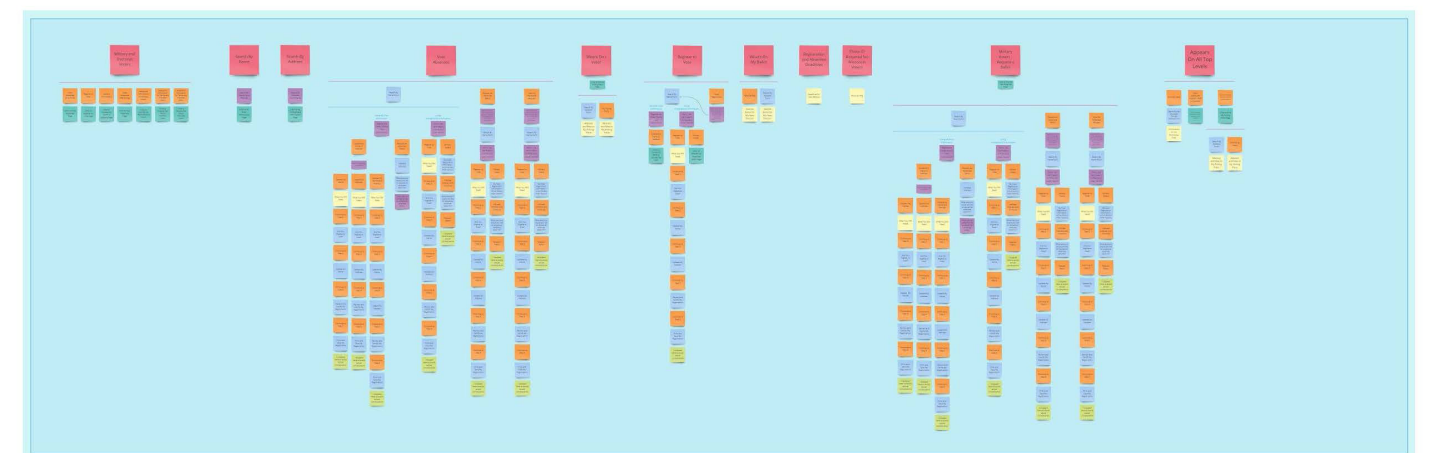
Other top levels from the home page.

Tree Testing Plan

I went back to my user testers to get some insight into how they actually use the site.

Proposed Tasks for Users to Complete:

1. Find my voter registration status (easy).
2. Find out if I can use my student ID as a photo ID to vote. (medium)
3. Request an absentee ballot as a military voter (hard).
4. Find out what a provisional ballot is (harder).

*A sample unregistered name and address would be provided for user testing process. Users would be instructed to follow the process as far as they can without incurring actual consequence. As I will be watching them I can tell them when to stop and when to keep going.

Thomas

52, Consistently registered voter, has used the site once recently to request an absentee ballot. Should be noted he works as a data specialist and has a lot of experience with card sorting and information architecture.

Found voter registration status very straightforward and easy, only wavering was between clicking 'My Voter Info' and 'Register to Vote', but chose 'My Voter Info'.

Looked around at the top buttons first before scrolling down, found the content page about photo ID requirements quickly but then took him a bit of time to find the specific info. Commented that the page was easy to find but very text heavy and difficult to sort through.

He was able to request an absentee ballot as a military voter very quickly, however he was confused at the difference between that and requesting a normal absentee ballot. Also commented that Military and Overseas Voters should belong in the main bar of buttons.

Could not find provisional ballots. This one was when he realized there is no search for content function on the website, he tried pages including Request Absentee and Find My Polling Place, using ctrl+f to search through text heavy pages. Gave up after a few minutes, and when I showed him where it was he did not think that was a logical place for it.

Rationale Behind the Tree Testing Tasks

I've chosen these scenarios as possible tests because they test different aspects of the main functions of the website. Finding my registration status is one that should be very easy, because that is a huge function of the site, and I will know there is a problem if users have any difficulty with it. The question about student IDs tests the content layout on the site, the actual page about photo ID requirements is very easy to find, but I want to see how easily users can read the information on that page. I thought requesting an absentee ballot as a military voter would be interesting because it's a process that seems a bit overcomplicated, I'm predicting that users will go through the subcategories for military voters and then be frustrated to find they just link back to the same Vote Absentee page. Lastly, I'm not sure whether I will use the provisional ballot task as it is actually difficult to find, but I'm wondering if my users agree with me that this page is in an illogical place. I also thought of this because one of my users was adamant this shouldn't even be on the website, and I'd like to see if the others agree.

Merci

54, consistently registered voter, has used the site multiple times to find polling places and request absentee ballots. Should also be noted that she has been a Wisconsin poll worker for the last four years.

Found registration status quickly, straightforward.

Had more difficulty with ID requirements, actually clicked a link I hadn't found before that took her to an outside page. Still found the relevant information, but commented that it was very hard to find. Wanted to see something like ID requirements in the main tabs as she said this was an important issue.

Found military voting after a bit of searching, thought the fact that it linked back to the regular Vote Absentee page a bit confusing.

Also could not find provisional ballots, she even said as a poll worker she didn't think this information even belonged on the website.

Other Comments: Didn't realize at first that clicking the logo would take you to the home page, commented she was looking for a more obvious 'Home' button. Didn't like the look of the website, said there's too much black.

Dylan

15, has never voted or visited the website.

Found voter registration very quickly, went straight to My Voter Info.

Scrolled through the homepage and found the Photo ID content page quickly, scanning through the list to find the relevant information. Noted that this wasn't in the main top bar, although he said it was still easy to find.

Only tester to notice that if you scroll down there is a link to request a ballot as a military voter instead of using the military link at the top of the page. Reported the process to be pretty straightforward.

Could not find provisional ballots. First clicked on Vote Absentee, then What's On My Ballot, then Register to Vote. Clicked around for a while, also noting there was no search function or FAQ. When he did give up he said that he would have tried the Contact Us link as a last resort. Thought it belonged on Vote Absentee.

Other Comments: Thought Photo ID requirements should be more highlighted, and wanted to see an FAQ section.

Insights from User Testing

- As I thought, all testers had difficulty finding provisional ballots, showing that there is definitely a space for a search function or a Frequently Asked Questions page.
- I thought they'd have more difficulty with military voting, but they all found that one pretty straightforward - perhaps the seeming redundancy just allows for many paths to lead to the desired outcome.
- It was interesting that Dylan had the easiest time with it as he was the one who had no experience with voting and the only one who hadn't used the website. This might show that the other two came into it with more preconceived notions about how the information should be organized. Despite this, I still respect their feedback because they represent the demographic actually using this website, and so if they are going to come in with biases, the site still needs to cater to those.

Initial Thoughts on the Redesign

I think the main thing to focus on with the redesign is the duplicate page links and making all content equally easy to find. The fact that none of my users were able to complete the last task tells me that there is definitely some content placed un-intuitively and I should go through and make sure all information is quickly accessible by the user. I also agreed with Dylan's comments that a search function and FAQ page would be helpful on this site, this kind of site is one where users are looking for important information and do not want to be clicking around trying to find it.
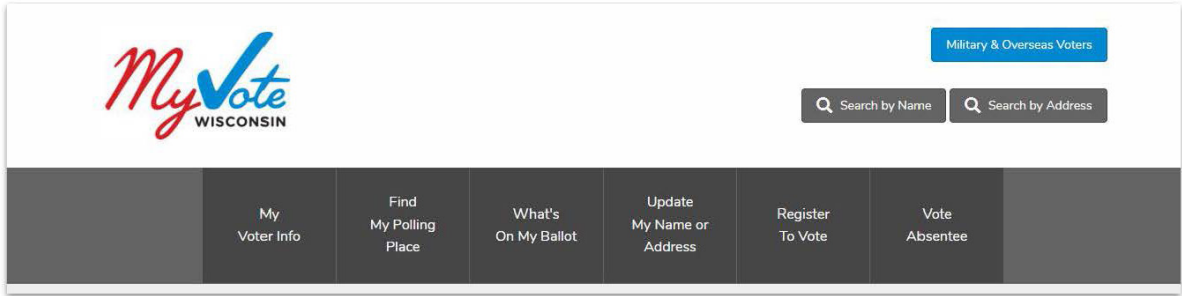
As far as the duplicate top level page links, I now think I understand the rationale behind it - having multiple possible pathways for the user did allow for them to quickly complete the tasks even if they had different ways of exploring the site, something I think necessary for a civic site that's going to have a broad range of users that also have high stakes in the information they are looking for. That being said, I think there needs to be a reevaluation of which pages are in need of multiple pathways. My users commented that they thought Photo ID requirements needed to be highlighted more, and the Search By Name and Search By Address tools on the home page were confusing because they didn't know what information that was going to return.

NEXT STATEWIDE ELECTION

2020 Partisan Primary

Tuesday, August 11, 2020

Vote Absentee   Where Do I Vote?   What's On My Ballot?   Register To Vote   +   What Do I Bring?

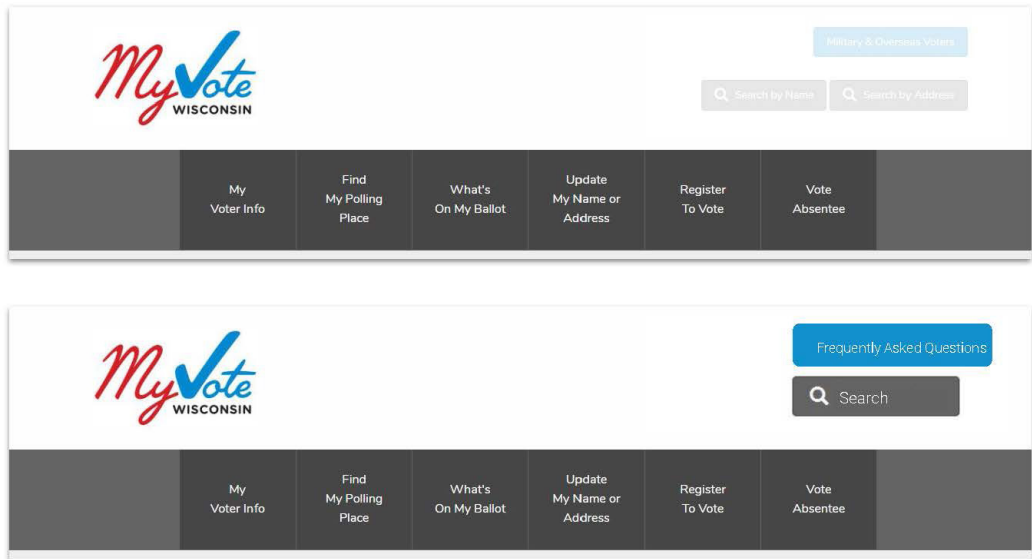**When is my next local election?** You can find your next local election by searching for your address.

Although the duplicate links on the home page were confusing at first, I now think it best to leave them to give the user multiple pathways to common needs. However, this reminded me that one of my users (Merci) mentioned she was looking for a page detailing what a voter needs to bring to the polls. I thought this was a great idea, and could fit well with these blue links that answer questions regarding the next upcoming election, and I designed a possible button to go along with them.   44

My user testers agreed that the site needed a search function, and one suggested a Frequently Asked Questions page would help to provide specified information. They also agreed that the original Search By Name/Address and Military Voter buttons were unnecessary and confusing, so I've taken that opportunity to replace them.   43

Another idea from one of my user testers was that Photo ID Requirements should be higher on the hierarchy, up with the top bar of page links. I agree with this, because changes to Photo ID laws is actually a recent issue in Wisconsin, and something many users are likely to have questions about.   45
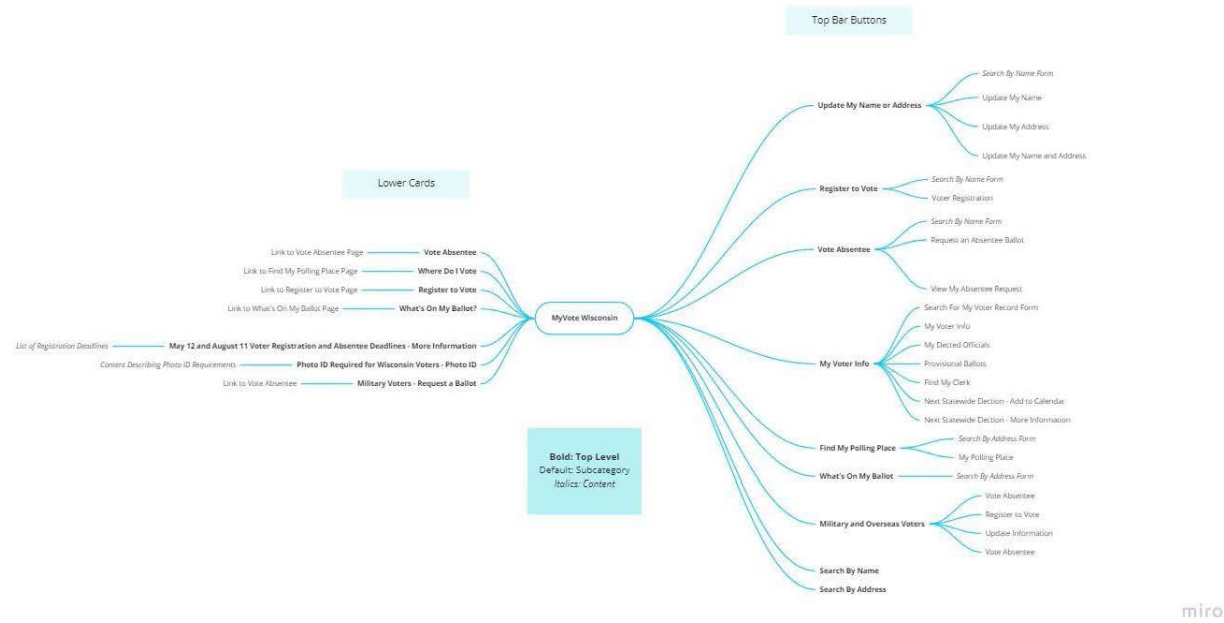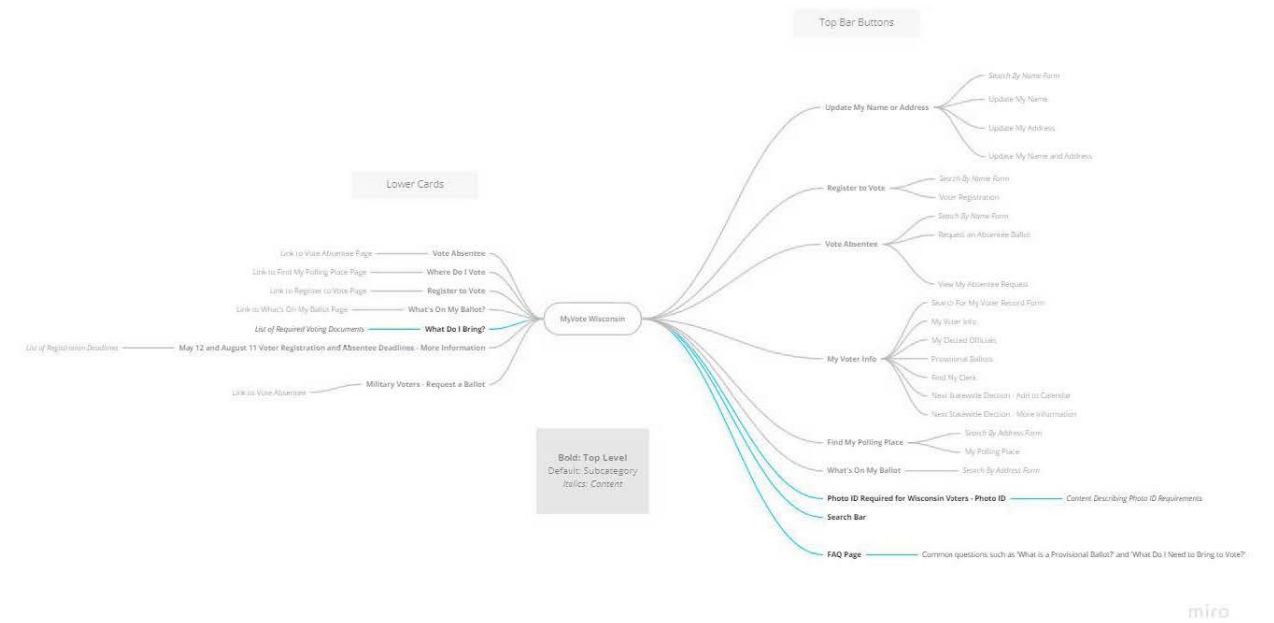
Original Site Structure

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Redesigned Structure

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Comparing Changes

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