

2005-06 SESSION

COMMITTEE HEARING RECORDS

Assembly Committee on Campaigns & Elections (AC-CE)

Sample:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt01a
- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt01b
- 05hrAC-EdR_RCP_pt02

➤ Appointments ... Appt

➤ **

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

➤ **

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH

➤ **

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ **

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

➤ **

➤ Hearing Records ... HR

➤ 05hr_sb0419_AC-CE_pt01

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ **

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ **

Alberta Darling
Wisconsin State Senator
Joint Committee on Finance

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE
ON CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS
SENATE BILL 419
May 18, 2006**

Good afternoon Chairman Freese and members of the committee. Thank you for scheduling SB 419 for a public hearing.

Senate bill 419 requires that absentee ballots may only be mailed to a permanent or "temporary" residence. [Example: homeless shelters, military bases, hospitals, and vacation homes.] Current law allows a voter to request that their absentee ballot be mailed to a third-party organization, who could then go door-to-door, delivering them to individuals at their homes. In 2003, that loophole allowed Milwaukee election officials to legally turn over voter-requested absentee ballots to a private business hired by a candidate.

The idea for this legislation originally leapt to the forefront in the spring of 2003 when a candidate for Milwaukee County Board was the victim of voter fraud. The loophole in Wisconsin's election laws negatively affected her chances to win a recall election against Board Chairman Lee Holloway. In the Milwaukee County case, Chairman Holloway's campaign manager, who ran a non-profit political organization at the time, asked for and received absentee ballots.

Consequently, it was legal to have supporters of one political campaign handle and deliver an absentee ballot to the homes and businesses of potential voters. Because of this obviously fraudulent act, I feel this aspect of Wisconsin's election laws should change. The shenanigans even led the Milwaukee County DA to file several criminal charges against several people who handled the ballots.

My grave concerns about access to absentee ballots by so-called "middle men" will result in more and more accusations and allegations by those who feel they are victims of this campaign loophole. Therefore, the obvious potential for vote fraud moved me to introduce the bill.

The bill does not change current law as it pertains to witnesses. Current law requires just one witness be present when an absentee ballot is filled out. I believe that the greatest concern is where the ballots are mailed, and I didn't want the more controversial witness requirement provision to stall this vital legislation.

I believe, as does the majority of the state Senate, that Senate Bill 419 is a move in the right direction for absentee ballot reform. The bill moved through the Senate on a bipartisan 27-6 vote.