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WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Assembly Bill 898: Changes to vital records references and procedures
Testimony of State Representative Joan Ballweg
Assembly Committee on Local Government
February 7, 2018**

Thank you, Chair Brooks and members of the committee for hearing Assembly Bill 898 today. This bill follows legislation I've authored over the past few sessions to modernize and maintain chapter 69 as it relates to vital records.

The State of Wisconsin implemented a Statewide Vital Records Information System (SVRIS) in 2010 and is continually implementing updates to the system. This change gave greater flexibilities to registrars and citizens to access vital records through modern methods. However, our statutes still reflect language that has become outdated and does not best describe current practice. For example, this chapter refers to "certificates" and "documents". Since registers can now do many procedures electronically, references to "records" would better describe a birth certificate that can be accessed electronically or on paper.

AB 898 will benefit Wisconsin Register of Deeds and their constituents in the following ways"

- Updating language in Chapter 69 allows Register of Deeds to effectively perform their statutory duties.
- Updating language will create consistency across the state by providing an updated reference and guide for daily procedures.
- As technology advances, vital records are being processed, accepted, and issued electronically through SVRIS, which is not currently reflected in statute.
- Statewide issuance of birth, death, marriage, and divorce records went into effect on January 1, 2017. Many of the statutes in Chapter 69 have not been update to reflect this new process.

I'm joined today by members of the Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association. They've been extremely helpful through this process and are issue experts.

Thank you for your time this morning. I'm happy to answer any questions.



Luther S. Olsen

State Senator

14th District

TO: Assembly Committee on Local Government
FROM: Senator Luther Olsen
DATE: February 7, 2018
SUBJECT: Testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 898

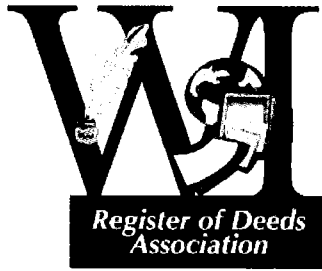
Thank you Chairman Brooks and the Assembly Committee on Local Government for holding a hearing and allowing me to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 898.

This legislation, at the request of the Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association, updates Chapter 69 which governs vital records. This chapter needs to be updated to incorporate the implementation of the Statewide Vital Records Information System (SVRIS) and other technological advancements.

On January 1, 2017, the implementation of SVRIS began to allow the statewide issuance of birth, death, marriage, and divorce records, yet the statutes have not been updated to reflect this new process. Before SVRIS, if you lived in a different county from where those records were recorded, you would still have had to go through that county's register of deeds rather than requesting it through the county you reside in. SVRIS has made retrieving these documents far more convenient for everyone, yet the statutes need to reflect this new process.

The Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association supports this proposal to create efficiencies for Register of Deeds and the public.

Thank you, members. I ask for your support and would be more than happy to answer any questions.



**Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association
Legislative Committee**

Committee Members: Tyson Fettes- Co-Chair, Sarah Guenther – Co-Chair, Heather Schwersenska, Kyle Franson, Karen Miller, Margo Katterhagen, Karen Manske, Carey Petersilka, Staci Hoffman, JoEllyn Storz, Mike Mazemke, Sue Ginter

<http://www.wrdaonline.org/Index.htm>

Support the cleanup of Chapter 69 relating to vital records AB898 & SB760

The Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association (WRDA) **supports the cleanup of Chapter 69 relating to vital records.** With the advancements in technology, the implementation of the Statewide Vital Records Information System (SVRIS) and statewide issuance, many of the statutes in Chapter 69 are not consistent with current procedures, with many being obsolete.

- **Responsibility to Constituents.** Wisconsin Statutes in Chapter 69 are regarding the vital records that our constituents use throughout their lives. It is important that these statutes be up to date so that the Register of Deeds can effectively perform their statutory duties to serve our constituents.
- **Consistency throughout offices.** There is a discrepancy in current statute and daily procedures. Local Register of Deeds offices use the statutes as a reference and guide to help our business partners. Funeral directors, coroners, marriage officiants, our constituents and many others depend on consistent practices statewide.
- **Technology advancements.** With the advancements in technology, the majority of Chapter 69 is outdated. Vital records are being processed, accepted, and issued electronically through the Statewide Vital Records Information System, which is not reflected in current statutes.
- **Statewide Issuance.** Statewide issuance of birth, death, marriage and divorce records went into effect on January 1, 2017; many of the statutes were not updated to reflect this new process.

For these reasons, **the WRDA strongly supports the cleanup of Chapter 69 relating to vital records AB 898 & SB760.** We ask that you partner with our association to continue to update and modernized our state statutes to reflect the rapid changes in technology.