



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# JESSE JAMES

Chairman Tusler and committee members,

Thank you for hearing Assembly Bill 667, and giving me the opportunity to testify today. Currently in Wisconsin, students who attend a public, private, or tribal school, are 16 or 17 years old and maintain a 3.0 grade point average, or meet other requirements put together by the school, are able to be appointed to serve as election inspectors with permission from their parents and administrator from their respective school.

AB 667, would add homeschooled students to the list of students who are able to participate as an election inspector.

This bill is a simple fix to allow homeschooled students the same privileges as public, private and tribal students. At a time when there is a need for more election inspectors, it just makes sense to get more young people involved in the democratic process.

**STATE SENATOR KATHY BERNIER**  
TWENTY-THIRD SENATE DISTRICT



State Capitol • P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707  
Office: (608) 266-7511 • Toll Free: (888) 437-9436  
Sen.Bernier@legis.wi.gov • www.SenatorBernier.com

**From: Senator Kathy Bernier**  
**To: The Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections**  
**Re: Testimony on Assembly Bill 667**

**Relating to:** allowing a pupil enrolled in a home-based private educational program to serve as an election inspector.

**Date: January 30, 2020**

Chairman Tusler and members of the committee, thank you for taking my testimony on Assembly 667 today. Representative James asked me to work with him on this bill to address a concern brought to him by a local resident about high school students serving as election inspectors.

Currently, students and public and private high schools are eligible to serve as election inspectors if they meet certain grade point requirements and get permission from their parent or guardian. If their grade point average is not above a 3.0, the school board or governing body of the school can establish criteria that would allow them to serve as an election inspector. This system works for most high school students that are interested in participating as an election inspector but there is no accommodation for non-traditional students that are home schooled. This bill would correct that oversight.

Assembly 667 would allow home schooled students who meet the grade point criteria and get permission from their parent or guardian to serve as an election inspector. If they do not have a 3.0 GPA, the administrator of their home school program can establish criteria for them to meet in order to participate as an election inspector. Assembly Bill 667 takes the existing plan for high school students to be election inspectors and extends it to home school students with no changes to the existing criteria.

I hope you will join me and Representative James in supporting this simple change to allow all high school students who wish to participate in elections to do so. Municipalities across Wisconsin are constantly searching for election inspectors and this bill will provide a new source of manpower to ensure our elections are run as efficiently as possible.

Chairman Tusler and committee members,

Thank you for hearing Assembly Bill 667 today. My name is Jessica Gunby and I reside at 2644 County Road E, Mount Horeb WI 53572. I recently became aware of Assembly Bill 667 and what it can do for homeschooled students.

Assembly Bill 667 will include home-schooled students ages 16 or 17 to volunteer as an election inspector. We have four children homeschooling at this time and our eldest is now 16. Volunteering at our local polling place is an important example of participation in both civic and community responsibilities. I very much wish for my children to be allowed to volunteer in this manner the same as other students in public, private, or tribal schools. I strongly urge you to pass Assembly Bill 667.

Thank you,  
Jessica Gunby

Dear Chairman Tusler and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to communicate my motivation to become an election monitor and ask you to allow homeschoolers like myself to participate. As a 16-year-old, I am too young to vote in elections, but I am old enough to understand the importance of our democratic election process and want to be involved. In the years before being able to vote, involvement and engagement in the election process can increase understanding of the election process and likelihood of participation once becoming old enough to do so.

The community of homeschoolers is larger than some may think. There are vocal choirs, sports teams, and several small group classes for homeschoolers. We pay attention to issues and discuss them, but the ways teens can be involved are limited. Acting as election monitors or poll workers is one way that we can be engaged in the election process. Throughout my education and my life, my parents have instilled in me the importance of civic action such as voting. I am asking you to show homeschooled young people that their participation in the election process is important, even before they themselves are able to vote.

Thank you for considering,

Kailyn Walukas

Dear Chairman Tusler and committee members:

Homeschoolers joke that everything can be made part of school, and a few weeks ago I found myself thinking that as I drove by a sign in downtown Eau Claire for training for poll workers. I mused, "That sounds like a great way for Kailyn to get exposure to our election process as part of our Government studies." I also hoped it would be an opportunity for her to complete some of the required volunteer service hours for the three National homeschool honor societies that she is a part of. Kailyn was very excited about the idea, so I sent an inquiry to the City of Eau Claire Elections Office and received this response:

"Sorry, but the law currently excludes homeschool students from being able to work as poll workers. We can only accept public or private school students. I have heard that there are folks trying to change the rules on that, but for the time being, she cannot be a poll worker."

That phrase, "there are folks trying to change that," led me to do some research to find out what was being done, and I found Assembly Bill 667 on our state legislature website.

This is the first-time homeschooling has ever been a barrier to providing our daughter with an opportunity to engage fully in our community as any other high school student could. As a 16 year-old high school Junior with a 4.0 GPA taking a full advanced course load, including Calculus and Physics, she qualifies in every other way to serve as an election volunteer. We have always properly reported with the PI-1206 as required by Wisconsin law, which we believe should meet the requirement of this law to be enrolled in school. She is enrolled in school - the Walukas Homeschool.

As homeschoolers with a focus on Classical Education, we cover Cicero's The Republic and The Laws, as well as On Obligations in our Government studies. To quote Cicero:

"What greater gift can we offer the Republic than to teach and instruct our youth?"

I ask you, what better way can we teach and instruct our youth than by engaging them in the obligations of our Republic? I hope that you will support extending the opportunity to engage in our electoral process as election monitors to my daughter and others who homeschool.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristin L. Walukas

Kristin Walukas 227 W. Lexington Blvd. Eau Claire, WI 54701

Dear Chairman Tusler, and Members of the Committee,

Thank You for the hearing on the proposed bill before you - one that allows Home school students to work the polls. I could not be there in person today, but I do want to share with you why I asked for this bill to be created and voted into law.

I have been involved in elections for over two decades. During that time, I have worked the polls all over Eau Claire, and witnessed firsthand, the shortages of poll workers, esp. younger ones.

Due to that, I got involved in asking hundreds of people to sign up to be poll workers. I have also done this on a state-wide basis through an organization. I have read our election laws dozens of times each year, to make sure we were in compliance with our state statutes.

One of my goals is to get younger people to work the polls, and high school students who meet the requirements. **To my utter shock, one key group of high school students were completely excluded from being allowed to work the polls during our elections, per our state statutes - That group was - Home Schooled Students.**

I recently discussed with a Clerk, about having homeschooled students work the polls. Her answer to me was - no they cannot. Their election office called the Wisconsin Election Commission to confirm that, and they said no, Home Schoolers are NOT allowed to work the polls!

The Stats for the total number of homeschooled students in the State of Wisconsin are not perfect. But from what I could find, the numbers are around thirty thousand, and going up. The students eligible to work the polls from that pool are in the hundreds.

\*All high school students 16 and up, are allowed in the WI. State Statute to work the polls, as long as they have a 3.0 grade point, have permission from their parent, and work out a plan with their Principal, if they do not have a 3.0 GPA. Private schools, tribal schools, public, everyone *but* home school students, can work the polls legally for a full day. ***All except - Home Schooled students. That is discrimination against one specific group - Home Schooled students!***

The State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction, does dictate several things that must be done for homeschooled students. How many hours of instruction they must have, testing, what they must complete to receive a diploma etc. Thus they are a part of our education system. Homeschooled students do have to comply with several things, in order for those students to receive an accepted education by the State of Wisconsin.

The conclusion then is - ***Why are they excluded/barred***, from being a paid poll worker like all other 16-18 year old high school students? I personally have known and worked with Home-Schooled students for over 2 decades. I have found them to be great students, intellectual, respectful, and highly motivated to serve in many capacities.

I would like to see this exclusion of Homeschoolers, not being allowed to work the polls, rectified in the state statute, with this bill.

This is why I believe this bill is good for the State of Wisconsin:

- Most areas of our state do not have enough poll workers.
- Clerks are desperate in many areas to fill those slots.
- In Presidential election years - the turnout is massive, we need a large pool of poll workers to choose from, to work those long elections.
- Our Poll worker pool is *aging rapidly in Wisconsin*. We must take that seriously and find replacements!
- **Younger** poll workers are desperately needed. They have more stamina for the long day, can work the *electronic voting machines* - and figure them out easily! They learn quickly too!
- More poll workers are needed that are **younger**, for the *in-person-absentee ballot voting*. There are not enough, if any, at those sites.
- Students who start working the polls in their teens, will hopefully have a decades long commitment to work the polls. This helps our municipalities to grow a pool of consistent workers, who are trained, and then work for years, possibly becoming Chief Inspectors in the future.
- Many students that are home schooled, have a more flexible schedule, and are able to be at the polls with out interfering with sports, and other extra-curricular activities. They can work the polls longer, and most likely the entire election day. (Child labor laws are waived in our state for working the polls.)
- Homeschooled students, may have the advantage of bringing a parent, who also signs up to work the polls with them, which greatly increases the poll worker pool.
- Homeschooled students receive many hours of civics, government, social studies courses, due to their time schedule, thus are *well prepared for participating* in their community as an election official.
- Homeschooled students are very serious about civics, government and elections, this is a natural place for them to continue that education, by participating in conducting elections at the polls.
- Teenagers should be poll workers, so they observe first hand, how the election process operates. Also the seriousness, preparation, hard work, and many details that go into our elections. This makes them better citizens, and most likely, committed voters in the future.

We want young people to care about voting, elections and to know the process.

Homeschool students are just as worthy as all other teens, to participate in working the polls. They will be a great addition to our State, municipalities, and will greatly increase our workforce for election days! This is a win for them, their clerks, and their polling locations in their communities!

Thank You for your consideration of this much needed bill!

Sincerely,

Laurie Forcier - Eau Claire Wisconsin