



## 2021 SENATE BILL 265

March 31, 2021 - Introduced by Senators AGARD, CARPENTER, L. TAYLOR, ERPENBACH and SMITH, cosponsored by Representatives HEBL, EMERSON, HONG, CABRERA, ANDERSON, BOWEN, HESSELBEIN, STUBBS, SINICKI, L. MYERS, SPREITZER, SUBECK and SHELTON. Referred to Committee on Government Operations, Legal Review and Consumer Protection.

- 1 **AN ACT to create** 13.45 (8) of the statutes; **relating to:** petitions for public  
2 hearings on bills.

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### *Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau*

This bill requires legislative committees to hold public hearings on bills based on petitions signed by individuals qualified to vote in Wisconsin, referred to as “qualified electors” in the statutes.

Under the bill, any qualified elector may petition for a public hearing on any bill. The bill requires that certain information be provided on the petition, including the bill number and analysis of the bill prepared by the Legislative Reference Bureau. Additionally, each qualified elector signing the petition must provide his or her address for purposes of voting. The bill also authorizes use of electronic petitions, which qualified electors may sign electronically. The bill requires the Elections Commission to prescribe the form of the electronic petition.

Each petition under the bill is required to be filed with the Elections Commission, which must then verify that the petition satisfies the bill’s requirements, including that all signers are qualified electors. If the commission determines that a petition for a public hearing on a bill is signed by qualified electors equaling at least 3 percent of the vote cast for the office of governor in the most recent gubernatorial election, the commission must certify the bill for a public hearing and file the certification with the legislature. Within 30 days after the commission files the certification with the legislature, at least one legislative committee having jurisdiction over the bill must hold a public hearing on the bill. The commission may not certify a petition after February 1 of each even-numbered year, as the legislature’s biennial regular session is coming to a close.

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For further information see the state fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

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*The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:*

1           **SECTION 1.** 13.45 (8) of the statutes is created to read:

2           13.45 (8) PUBLIC HEARINGS; PETITION. (a) At least one legislative committee  
3 having jurisdiction over a bill shall hold a public hearing on the bill within 30 days  
4 after the elections commission files a certification with the legislature under par. (c)  
5 1. certifying a petition for public hearing on the bill.

6           (b) 1. Any qualified elector may petition for a public hearing on a bill under this  
7 subsection. The petition shall have on the face at the top in bold print the words  
8 “PETITION FOR A PUBLIC HEARING” and shall provide the applicable bill  
9 number and bill analysis prepared by the legislative reference bureau. Each signer  
10 of the petition shall affix his or her signature to the petition, accompanied by his or  
11 her municipality of residence for voting purposes, the street and number, if any, on  
12 which the signer resides, and the date of signing. In addition, each signer shall  
13 legibly print or type his or her name in a space provided next to his or her signature.  
14 If the petition is electronic, a signer shall provide his or her electronic signature. The  
15 commission shall prescribe the form of an electronic petition for purposes of this  
16 subsection. No electronic petition is valid under this subsection unless it is in the  
17 form prescribed by the commission.

18           2. Each petition subject to this subsection shall be filed with the commission.  
19 The commission shall verify that each signature on the petition satisfies subd. 1. and  
20 is the signature of a qualified elector of this state. No signature on a petition subject

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1 this subsection is valid unless the signer is a qualified elector of this state and the  
2 requirements under subd. 1. are met.

3 3. If a petitioner under this subsection uses an electronic petition in the form  
4 prescribed by the commission under subd. 1., once the petition is signed by at least  
5 1,000 qualified electors, the elections commission shall, if requested by the  
6 petitioner, post the petition on the commission's Internet site, allowing qualified  
7 electors to sign the petition electronically via the commission's Internet site.

8 (c) 1. If the commission determines that a petition for a public hearing on a bill  
9 filed with the commission under par. (b) 2. has been signed by qualified electors  
10 equaling at least 3 percent of the vote cast for the office of governor at the last  
11 preceding gubernatorial election, the commission shall certify the bill for a public  
12 hearing. The commission shall file the certification with the chief clerk of each house  
13 of the legislature for distribution to the appropriate standing committees in the  
14 manner provided under s. 13.172 (3).

15 2. The commission may not certify a petition under subd. 1. after February 1  
16 of each even-numbered year and before the next regular session of the legislature  
17 commences, as provided under s. 13.02 (2).

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(END)