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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

**WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS**

2005-06

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

**Committee on Labor and Election Process
Reform...**

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
(**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
(**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Stefanie Rose (LRB) (June 2012)

2305 N 36th Place
Sheboygan WI 53083
rharker@charter.net
ruth.harker@gotoltc.edu
October 3, 2005

Representative Rob Kreibich
Chairperson of Assembly Colleges & Universities Committee
(please share this with the committee)

Re: Testimony against AB 603, a bill to eliminate Wisconsin Technical College System District Boards and replace them with elected boards.

Dear Representative Kreibich:

If all current district boards would be eliminated and 144 board members would be unseated, for Lakeshore Technical College, this would mean loss of continuity, shared vision and mission, and connections with the community. Collective experience and wisdom of veteran board members, as well as expertise in the work world and leadership in their respective fields, would be gone. LTC's mission, to enrich lives and strengthen the economy by preparing a work force that is skilled, diverse, and flexible, may take a back seat to political jockeying and hidden agendas. To best meet the needs of the future with innovation and excellence, it takes leadership from a non-political board, made up of volunteers, an appointed board that is knowledgeable, experienced, and dedicated.

Elimination of all categories of board service, e.g. employer/employee, local elected official, school administrator, the balance of male and female, would be a mistake. At LTC, the board celebrates strength in the diversity of the board representation, equally represented by management and labor. Members mirror many trades and professions that represent LTC's programs. Often the local official and school administrator positions on LTC's board have helped the college understand and take the lead in inter-governmental cooperation and effectiveness. Statutory plans of representation are reviewed and approved at the state level to ensure broad representation by gender and racial/ethnic background.

By creating nine sub-district areas within each college district, a "non-partisan" board member elected by popular election from each area to serve a four-year term, representation would be by geographical area. LTC's district certainly is divided between cities, villages, towns and rural areas. However, more important distinctions would be among business, small business, and industry needs, apprenticeships, agriculture, and diverse needs of many categories of students. Wisconsin Technical Colleges have worked extremely hard to create partnerships, alliances within the communities, and shared programs, courses and services with other districts. These differences cross geographical boundaries, ignoring artificial lines drawn on a map, to benefit multiple communities, customers, and students. In an election, "non-partisan" may not apply, when campaign

contributions can't help but play a role in setting individual agendas. Also, in some elections with low voter turnout, persons may be elected that are neither qualified nor really interested.

In my opinion, Wisconsin benefits from the best technical college system in the United States. Other states study and adopt the Wisconsin model. The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), is made up of 16 locally-governed districts, under the guidance of the WTCS Board, providing state-level strategic direction, accountability, coordination, and leadership. This allows WTCS to be responsive, yet meet state-wide and cross-district needs and priorities. Besides the state and district boards, every program has a community-based advisory committee that reviews and makes recommendations to the district board. I participated on LTC's Materials Management Advisory Board for eight years prior to my being appointed to the District Board.

The current detailed appointment process for Technical College boards includes public notice, public hearing with public access to written candidate background materials, and interviews with opportunity for public input. The Lakeshore District encompasses parts of five counties, so five county board chairs review candidate applications. Thorough interviews are conducted and trustees are selected to balance board categories.

It has been proposed that with elected boards, initial board terms would be staggered so that two or three seats would be on the ballot each spring. At Lakeshore Technical College, terms are staggered, and although there is no term limit, there is a real mix of new members and experienced members. It takes at least a year for a new board member to be a contributing member, understanding needs of community, students, and business and industry. In times of economic downturn and layoffs, technical colleges step up quickly to provide quality and accessible learning. In recent years, Manitowoc and Sheboygan County businesses laid off hundreds of people. LTC revised priorities to meet needs of displaced workers for assessment and training. Also, changing technology requires flexibility and timely response. LTC regularly reviews, starts, changes, or stops classes and programs. LTC needs continuity on the board to best serve and respond to the changing marketplace.

Campaign finance and election rules would follow State Assembly procedures. LTC's board is already bound by state laws and rules, ethics and disclosure practices. The board follows Wisconsin open meeting and records rules. There is ample opportunity for public comment and input. In linking with the community, public input is requested on budgeting, programming and priorities. The trustees on the board at LTC are not politicians with personal agendas; they do however, share a passion for education, are advocates for students needs for technical training and lifelong learning. They are committed to developing a competitive workforce.

I am a volunteer; an appointed board member. I am not a politician. I have been on the board at Lakeshore Technical College for 16 years. Policy governance demands LTC's board look to the future, create the vision and mission and be liason to customers and community, facilitating listening My responsibilities lay with the community, the taxpayers, the needs of business and industry and our students.

In 2003, the Assembly Speaker's Taskforce to Review the WTCS recommended that the current board model be preserved. Technical colleges are responsive, flexible, and accessible to students and business and industry and should not be separated from the board governance model in place and working well since 1911.

Everything needed for a balanced, effective, efficient technical college system, from the state to local districts, is in place and working well, providing great technical training for students and economic development for communities of Wisconsin. Please do not dismantle a system that works so well.

Sincerely,

Ruth M. Harker



October 3, 2005

To Whom it may concern

I am a retired district board member from the Blackhawk Technical College District. I served in that position for 10 years and was involved in Statewide and National activities during that time with only expenses reimbursed. I met many other dedicated board members from across the State who contributed expertise to all. The current makeup of the Technical college boards as determined by the legislature provides a great cross section of the citizens who are served by the technical colleges. I find proposal AB603 a weak replacement of what exists and has worked well for many years. In addition, I question the costs that would minimally increase by almost \$150,000 a year just to administer the change. This presupposes that candidates who would spend money to be elected would be willing to serve with no compensation.

I hope that wisdom will prevail and that the dedication and contributions of current and past Technical College Boards will be recognized and retained to continue to provide our citizens with excellent education for employment and a great contribution to the economy of our beloved State.

Audrey C. Hein
N2557 Richland Rd
Monroe, WI 53566
608-328-4848
ahein@tds.net



Carol Holmes
W4988 Airport Road
New Glarus, WI 53574
October 3, 2005

Representative Rob Kreibich
Chairperson
Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Honorable Representative Kreibich:

I am writing to express my opposition to AB 603, the current bill intended to replace appointed Technical College boards with elected boards. As one who worked at Madison Area Technical College for twenty-five years, I have had the opportunity to work closely with many boards over the years, and I have watched this issue arise on numerous other occasions.

My career at MATC began as an instructor and as a member of the local AFT union. While in attendance at a national educational program I had the opportunity to mix with colleagues from around the country. Most of them were in disbelief that our faculty unions in the state had not fought hard for elected boards. The general view was that the average person poorly understands technical/community college boards. Therefore, at the time of elections, special interest groups (college faculty in particular) gained great leverage as they invested in the campaigns of candidates and had them with an ongoing loyalty to the faculty. Those faculty members saw the Wisconsin model as unfriendly to faculty unions as it lacked the political clout that goes with an elected system.

That was my introduction to the pros and cons of an elected system versus the current appointment system. Though I strongly believe that there are improvements that could be made in the current system, replacing it with a system whereby people are elected would be irresponsible in my opinion. The current system provides representation from a variety of key stakeholder groups, it is inexpensive in that board members serve in a volunteer capacity, it has a track record of overseeing a system with some of the best return per tax dollar spent of any system of government, and it has the usual safeguards for public meetings and public disclosure that apply to other governmental bodies in the state. The fact that this issue has arisen on numerous occasions in the past, has

been studied by prior Assembly Task Forces, and has remained in tact, speaks for itself.

I have recently read Thomas Friedman's book The World is Flat. I believe that this book should be required reading for all public officials today as we look at the role of the United States in the world marketplace. If ever there was a time for emphasis on quality improvement and evolution, it is now. How we care for our educational institutions and what we demand of them is critical to our future. This is a time for evolution not revolution if the needed transformations are going to take place throughout higher education. I view the loss of 144 experienced board members as a kind of disruption that would be intolerable in these critical times. These people have collectively built a knowledge base that would be hard to replace. They have to be helped to focus on the issues needing addressed so that we have adequate numbers of citizens adequately prepared to compete in today's global workforce. This is not a time for distraction about things like the appointment/election process.

Politicizing this system, in my opinion, would be a huge step backward. Though I am unable to be present to testify at the hearing, I would welcome the opportunity to provide further feedback related to the bill. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Carol Holmes



Jean Trempe

315 Broadway Avenue
Wausau, WI 54403
715-845-4611

October 3, 2005

Representative Rob Kreibich-Chairperson
Assembly Colleges & University Committee
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Subject: Opposition to Bill AB 603

Dear Representative Kreibich:

I write to you today as a Technical College Graduate, a property owner and taxpayer as well a member of a Technical College Board of Trustees. Please share this letter with the rest of your committee members.

I share with you the elements of today's Board of Trustee structure that makes Wisconsin Technical Colleges the envy of our counterparts across the nation.

- **Board Member Geographic Diversity**
The current process ensures that the entire district, including smaller, more rural communities are represented. Major metropolitan areas or counties could dominate voting and be over-represented at the expense of those smaller, rural communities. In Northcentral's district, Marathon County and the greater Wausau area has the greatest population base of the 10 counties we represent. Today's plan of representation guards against having all the board members coming from this area. Smaller communities are in danger of losing their voice if this bill should pass.
- **Board Member Professional Diversity**
As you are aware, Wisconsin's Technical Colleges are important to Wisconsin's economic viability. We are in the business of workforce development. The current appointment process includes a statutory dictate for the make-up of our boards. Representatives include employer members, employee members, an elected local official, and a school district administrator. Our boards consist of some of the best minds in the Wisconsin Business environment. Our board membership includes representatives from the leaders in the healthcare field, leaders in manufacturing, union members, members of county boards, county clerks, professionals in human resources, financial experts, K12 district administrators. How will the quality of these boards be ensured without this kind of representation? How better to serve our communities than by working with the businesses and industries that are driving our economy and the livelihood of you constituents? What better way is there to ensure collaboration with K12 districts than by seating someone intimately familiar with the K12 districts and the opportunities available? This cornerstone of success for the colleges will be lost under this bill.
- **Board Member Gender and Ethnic Diversity**
Local plans of representation take diversity a step further and ensure a mix of gender and racial/ethnic backgrounds. These plans of representation are statutorily required plans that are reviewed and approved at the State level. Specific appointments are reviewed to assure appointments are consistent with local plans. What kinds of checks and balances will be in place if these boards are elected? This balance will be lost.

- **Board Make-up Keeps Politics and Special Interests Out**
Our boards are made up of community volunteers. These non-paid positions are community based. Our advocacy lies with improving the quality of life for our stakeholders and communities at a reasonable cost to taxpayers. The current board appointment model is designed to assure that board members are not representing individual political agendas or agendas of those who fund political races or campaigns. In my view, you will lose a number of excellent business leaders, financial experts and alike if they are forced to become professional politicians. I personally would see no reason to run for a board position, if political agendas verse the good of the community and students we serve enters into the picture. Frankly, I would not want the job if it will cost me to volunteer.

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting of college trustees from across the county. You need to research some of the recent examples of how well elected college boards are functioning. California would be an interesting case study for you. In that state, these boards are used to raise political agendas and personal interests. Often times these roles are used as a stepping-stone to the next political position, leaving board turn over at staggering rates. These schools are left in continuous turmoil with little consistent direction from their boards. I had the opportunity to discuss this with a frustrated California College Board member who inquired about our successful appointment processes. By the way, Presidents of California community colleges are leaving their positions in record numbers. Wisconsin has a long history of excellence in our Technical College System. We are recognized nationwide as a leader. Why are you willing to take a gamble with such a successful key to Wisconsin's workforce development needs?

- **Assembly Speaker's Task Force Recommendations**
I am not sure how many taxpayer dollars were involved with this yearlong study, but it seems as if it was wasted. This task force was comprised of legislators and citizens from around the state. A thorough study of the Wisconsin Technical College System included college governance, funding, mission, service and accountability to taxpayers. This task force's final recommendations included: "Maintain the current method of appointing members of the technical college district board." Why is this bill being brought forth despite this recommendation after a thorough review was conducted at taxpayer expense?
- **Appointed Board Accountable to Taxpayers**
On this topic, I can only speak to my experience with NTC's Board, however I am confident that other trustees currently serving on Wisconsin Technical College Board would convey the same information. I have served on our local board for over 9 years. I am one of the longest serving members. I am honored by the trust the County Board Chairs that make up our appointment committee have placed in me. I do not have a personal relationship with any of them. I did not come into the role with any personal or political agenda. I have continued to serve based on the merits of my professional background and the quality of the work I do on the board. I am a former student as is my husband. I have a vested interest in serving my community.

As a board, we have been very contentious related to the school's financial matters. As you know, the Technical Colleges have operated under a 1.50 operational mill rate for a number of years. Northcentral Technical College has run far under this cap for a number of years as most of the colleges have. With leaders in business and industry and financial people on our boards, we understand the need to manage our funds and balance budgets. Each year as we review our budget, we make difficult decisions to cut costs, programs and staff to balance our budgets. We have held our college leadership to improving effectiveness in all operational matters. As a result they have been creative, forming consortias to control everything from insurance costs to computer maintenance cost to utility costs. They have looked to business and industry to form collaborate efforts yielding agreements for low or no cost state of the art equipment for our students. Our agreement with Phillips Medical Equipment is one of many examples. Most of our schools enjoy very favorable bond ratings with Moody's allowing us to

October 3, 2005

gain an advantage in the cost of borrowing funds due to our very prudent fiscal practices. This saves taxpayers money. These are just a few examples of the impact our appointed boards have on cost containment. At the risk of sounding critical, elected officials could learn a few things from these appointed boards when it comes to balancing budgets and keeping tax increases at a minimum.

I will close by providing you with some statistics. The heart of community and technical colleges nationally is that non-political boards locally govern them. Nineteen of the thirty-six states (53%) appoint all board members. Another four states appoint a portion of their board members. Only thirteen states elect all board members and three of these are state-level only boards. States with elected boards tend to organize college districts by counties or municipalities and not by geographic regional districts across multiple communities and counties. Having been involved with the Technical Colleges both as a student and as a board member, elected board will not enhance the effectiveness of these institutions, it will deter from it.

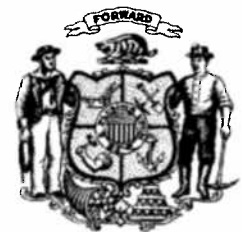
Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Jean Trempe
Northcentral Technical College Board Member
315 Broadway Avenue
Wausau, WI 54403



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



no date

Representative Rob Kreibich
Chairperson
Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Congressman Kreibich,

This letter is in regards to AB 603, a bill to eliminate district boards and replace them with elected boards. I am requesting that you oppose this bill.

I am currently serving on the Waukesha County Technical College Board and have for the past five years. I serve in the employee position. The opportunity to serve is a great honor and gives me the opportunity to give back to the school, of which I am a two time graduate, and my community.

The Wisconsin appointed Technical College District Boards are recognized as National Leaders and Role Models. We are a network of volunteers working to serve our communities and students. I personally, as many other appointed Board Members in the state, use personal vacation time from my regular job to participate in board development activities. We volunteer thousands of hours attending school functions such as graduation, honors and awards, student government and faculty. We work diligently to connect students on all levels, from all walks of life, and from all cultures to the college so they can be the workforce of tomorrow. We help foster partnerships between the business community and the colleges.

The 144 Wisconsin Technical System College Board Members serve with pride. We are proud of the system and the wonderful things that happen for students, communities, and the state of Wisconsin because of our work. We know that the Wisconsin Technical College System is the Key to the Economic Engine and that it returns more to the economy than any other publicly funded activity. The Technical College System doesn't just "walk the talk, we "walk the walk" and have the statistics to prove it.

The Wisconsin Technical System Boards with its appointed 144 members are doing their job. Politics, Republican, Democrat, Independent, or Other, does not drive our work and our decisions. Ethics and ethical decisions are held in the highest regard.

I think it is a travesty to even consider changing from appointed to elected boards.

1. Why would you as legislators want to fix what is most assuredly not broken?
2. Why would you as legislators want to take away the opportunity for each citizen, an voter, to voluntarily serve their own community?
3. Why would you as legislators want to disrupt the geographical, professional, background, gender, and minority status of the current non-political/non-partisan volunteer board?
4. Why would you as legislators, in all honesty, want to eliminate the voter who can not

- afford the cost of an election from making application and being appointed to serve?
5. Why would you as legislators even consider elected versus appointed boards just on added cost and burden to tax payers alone?
 - 6 How can you, as paid legislators, possibly justify to the tax payers and voters that you are changing long standing volunteer positions to paid elected positions without any statistical justification?

Change should not be made just to make change. Change should not be made just to keep a few happy. Change should only be made when change affects the whole in a positive way. Changing The Wisconsin Technical College System Board to elected versus appointed boards is not in the best interest of the whole.

The Technical College District Boards excellence in representation and governance is a proud legacy since 1911. A quote from Governor Walter Kohler, Jr 1956, "We in Wisconsin feel that certain aspects of our vocational education program are unique. We are proud of its development because it is a product of the people. It was initiated through a series of studies made by lay people, legislators and educators. It has continued to function with leadership from the same groups of people. The result is that it reflects the character of our state". This is still reflected in our volunteer system of today.

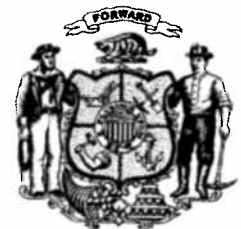
Only thirteen states elect all board members. The heart of community and technical colleges nationally is that they are community-governed by non-political boards. I implore you to not change a wonderful effective system that is working, and working well. The tax payers of this state would be better served if the legislators focused on areas that do need fixing and change of which I am sure there are many.

Sincerely,

Marilyn R. Grainger
Waukesha County Technical Board Trustee
W264 S1012 MapleWay N
Waukesha, WI 53188



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



No date

Representative Joan Ballweg
Co-Chairperson
Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Ballweg:

As Moraine Park Technical College, I would like to encourage you and the committee to reconsider the impact that passage of AB603 would have on our technical college system. During my career, I have had the opportunity to serve at colleges with elected boards as well as those with appointed boards. It has been my experience that the Wisconsin approach to appointed boards provides for broader representation across the district as well as greater diversity among its membership than any elected board I have had the opportunity to work with.

The far reaches of our district and smaller communities have representation as well as the large communities. I believe this is a strength as board members from those areas continually remind us of their community's needs for technical education. Thus, my district has outreach sites in small communities like Berlin, Hartford, Ripon and Mayville as well as the larger communities of Fond du Lac, West Bend and Beaver Dam where our campuses are located. When Ripon had some businesses close, we were part of the Rapid Response team and had classrooms available where we could retrain those workers. Our presence in that community and the fact that one of our board members is from that community certainly had an impact on the acceptance of our help.

Wisconsin statute 38.08 requires that the nine-member board be made up of two employers, two employees, an elected official, a school administrator and three at-large members assures greater diversity of opinion and interests on the board. The system also requires a diversity of gender and racial/ethnic representation to assure that all factions of our district have a voice. This make up of the board also allows us to hear from the employers of our graduates as well as the schools that provide many of our entering freshmen. Through these board members we receive feedback about the preparation of our entering students as well as how well our graduates are prepared when they enter the workforce. Our elected official provides input from the communities and/or counties we serve. One of the strengths of our technical college system are its appointed boards and their diversity.

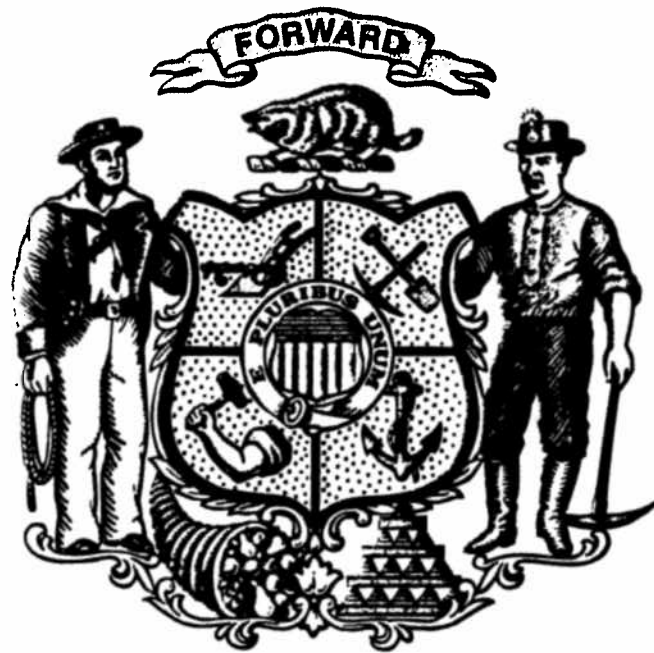
To assure equal representation across our district, the county board chairmen and chairwomen who appoint Moraine Park's board members have determined that board membership will be distributed equally throughout our district. Thus, about half of our board members come from the western half of our district and half from the eastern side of our district—another example of how the elected officials who appoint our board member work cooperatively to assure equitable representation.

To change the make up of our board to elected members who had to pay for a campaign in order to be elected to a position for which there is no remuneration is a concern. Would future board members run for election because they see this position as the first step to elected state offices? This was the case for the public school boards in South Dakota where many of the state representative's and senator's first elected office was as a school board member. If so, would those board members really be interested in the position because they had a commitment and interest in the technical college? Today we have board members whose only reason for serving on our board is because they believe in our mission to provide Wisconsin's skilled workforce.

In summary, Wisconsin has one of the best technical college systems in the nation. The quality of this system is largely due to the great support and oversight we receive from our legislature, our governor and our dedicated appointed board members who work tirelessly for the good of our colleges. Please think carefully before you change a governance system that has served the state so well.

Sincerely,

Gayle Hytrek, Ed.D.
President, Moraine Park Technical College



no date

Sent by email -- RE: Opposition to AB603

Dear Representative Towns,

This communication is to ask you, as a member of the Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee, to please oppose AB603.

The Wisconsin Technical College System is a very vital component in the economic development process for the State of Wisconsin. The WTCS provides highly skilled workers to meet the employment demands of our business and industry partners throughout the state.

Wisconsin Statutes 38.08 (1) (a) defines the composition of Technical College District Boards. In short this statute says that the boards shall be composed of 9 members, including 2 employers, 2 employees, 3 additional members, a school district administrator and one elected official. This is a diverse cross section of individuals with different areas of interest and expertise that collectively compose Board Policy and provide institutional direction to College Administration.

The Wisconsin Technical College System under this form of governance has historically been recognized for their ability to rapidly change and adapt curriculums to match the ever changing employment needs.

Assembly Bill 603 would completely eliminate a governance model that has been tried and tested and found to be very effective. It would also eliminate all 144 current district board members in all 16 districts all at the same time (July 1, 2007). This aspect of the bill alone does not seem reasonable.

New boards would not include categories of board service and not insure compliance of State Statute 38.10 (2) (c) which requires WTCS District Appointment Committees to formulate a plan of representation for the membership of district boards. The language states: "The plan shall give equal consideration to the general population distribution within district and the distribution of women and minorities within the district... The plan shall form the basis upon which membership of the district board is determined. AB603 does not have provisions to insure this type of representation.

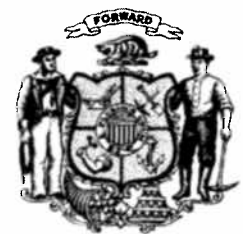
I am asking for your opposition to AB603. Please contact me with your position on this bill.

Thank You.

Thomas Westrick
Blackhawk Technical College, Board Chair
UAW-GM Joint Training Representative
116 N. Crescent Drive
Milton, WI 53563



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



AB 603

Appointed and Elected College Boards

The Value and Importance of Wisconsin's Appointed Technical College District Boards

Paul Gabriel

Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

Summary

Technical College District Boards: Excellence in Representation and Governance -- *A proud legacy since 1911; A copied and proven national model (page 1).*

Technical College Boards are as Representative as Elected Boards -- *Geographically, by profession, background, gender, and minority status; As non-political/non-partisan volunteers; Because vacancies can be filled without special elections (page 2).*

Locally Appointed Boards - Part of Balanced and Accountable State-Local Governance Structure -- *Local boards are part of effective shared state and local governance; Local boards are only one part of colleges' community input (page 3).*

Boards Operate as Openly, Publicly, and With as Much Opportunity for Public Input as Any Form of Local Government -- *Board appointment is a democratic process; Boards operate openly and publicly under the same laws as all local governments; Board members follow the same ethics laws as elected officials (pages 3-4).*

Wisconsin Technical Colleges are a Key Economic Engine and Return More to the Economy than Any Other Publicly Funded Activity -- *Technical colleges' return on investment and responsiveness is related to local board governance (pages 4-5).*

Wisconsin's Appointed Technical College District Boards are Recognized as National Leaders and Role Models -- *Volunteer board members are well-known nationally for commitment and leadership; Are leaders in quality improvement and in promoting partnership and collaboration (pages 5-6).*

A Comprehensive Legislative Taskforce Review Recommended Maintaining the Current Appointed Boards Model (page 6).

(November, 2004)

Appointed and Elected College Boards

The Value and Importance of Wisconsin's Appointed Technical College District Boards

Paul Gabriel, Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association
Updated November, 2004

Wisconsin's Technical College Board Model is Designed for Excellence in Local Representation and College Governance

A Proud Legacy -- Wisconsin's district board governance and locally-appointed board model was crafted by the 1911 Progressive-Era legislature that created both the nation's first vocational, technical, and adult education system, and the nation's first unemployment compensation program.

"Local boards are an integral part of the 1911 legislation. The rationale for them was to ensure that the course of vocational education would be guided by lay people who were knowledgeable about the world of work. The boards were to be appointed by existing governing bodies to ensure equal representation of management and labor and to ensure that the board positions would be filled with people genuinely interested in nurturing quality vocational educational programs."¹

In 1956, then Governor Walter Kohler, Jr. wrote:

"We in Wisconsin feel that certain aspects of our vocational education program are unique. We are proud of its development because it is a product of the people. It was initiated through a series of studies made by lay people, legislators and educators. It has continued to function with leadership from the same groups of people. The result is that it reflects the character of our state."¹

A Copied and Proven National Model – The heart of community and technical colleges nationally is that they are community-governed by non-political boards. The majority of states with community and technical college boards appoint their board members. Fifty-three percent of states (19 of 36) appoint all board members.² Four states appoint a portion of board members.² Only thirteen states elect all board members,² and three of these are state-level only boards. States with elected college boards tend to organize college districts by county or municipality and not by regional district across multiple communities and counties.

Wisconsin Technical College Boards are as Representative as Elected Boards

Geographically -- Appointment assures that the entire district, including smaller communities and rural areas, is well-represented. With district-wide elections, a large community or county will dominate voting and likely be over-represented at the expense of outlying areas. For example, Madison Area Technical College includes all or parts of twelve counties, each of which participates in appointing board members consistent with a statutorily required plan of representation assuring the entire district has a voice in governing the college. This is the case despite the fact that the majority of the population resides in Madison and Dane County.

By Profession, Experience and Background -- Appointment assures that each board has representatives including employers, employees, an elected local official and a school district administrator. Appointment rules also assure that no such group dominates board membership. Local official and school administrator positions on each board have helped the technical colleges become leaders in inter-governmental cooperation/efficiency.

By Gender and Minority Group Status -- Appointment following locally-tailored plans of representation assures there is broad representation by gender and racial/ethnic background. These statutorily required plans are reviewed and approved at the state level, and specific appointments are reviewed to assure appointments are consistent with local plans.

Because They are Volunteers Insulated from Partisan Politics and Its Funding -- Appointed boards are volunteer-based and community-focused and are not compensated like elected local officials such as town, village, county and municipal officials. The board appointment model was designed to (and helps assure that) board members are not representing individual political agendas or the agendas of those who fund political races or campaigns. Anecdotal information from states with elected college boards suggests that elected board members are more likely to pursue board seats to fulfill a specific personal or political agenda, and are less likely to represent the diverse universe of top business and industry leadership, educators, and local officials.

Because Vacancies Can Be Filled More Quickly and Cheaply than with Elected Boards -- Vacancies can be filled quickly and inexpensively by public hearing rather than by a multi-county special election. Quickly filling vacancies helps assure full community representation rather than waiting for the next regular election cycle or incurring the cost of a special election.

Locally Appointed Boards Are Part of a Balanced and Accountable State-Local Governance Structure

The Best of Combined State and Local Governance -- The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) is governed through a balance of locally-controlled and accountable boards working under the WTCS Board, which provides state-level strategic direction, accountability, and leadership, across the system. The result is a locally responsive system of colleges that meet overall statewide needs and priorities as efficiently as possible.

The WTCS Board monitors and approves key local decisions, such as program offerings and building projects, to provide statewide coordination and oversight. The WTCS Board assures local district appointments meet the local appointing authority's own rules through plans of representation.

Local Boards Are Only a Part of Community Input in College Governance -- Appointed college boards represent only a portion of community involvement and representation in technical colleges. Every program at every college has a community-based advisory committee making recommendations to the board. Every college has a community advisory committee to monitor public-private competition. Each college has active faculty, staff, student, and profession-specific groups that add to the value of services provided in the community.

Wisconsin Technical College Boards Operate as Openly, Publicly, and With as Much Opportunity for Public Input as Any Form of Local Government

Board Appointment is a Democratic Process -- Appointment processes take place in public hearings with broad, public, community notice and opportunity for community participation. The appointment process includes review and public access to written candidate background materials, access to in-person candidate interviews, public comment ability at appointment hearings, and access to the candidates themselves. No person may be considered for board service unless he/she was announced in pre-appointment public notices and participates in-person in appointment activities.

Appointment is based on locally-controlled "plans of representation" that are created locally and that are reviewed each year in public hearings, prior to appointments being made, to assure each district's local needs are best met in the appointment process.

Appointment Does Not Create Professional Politicians -- Even though no college appointment authority has a "term limit" for board service, appointed boards have regular turnover and a healthy mix of veteran and new members. The median appointment date for Wisconsin Technical College board members is mid-2000.³ That is, one-half of all district board members were first appointed in Fall, 2000 or later. By law, no person may

serve as the chairperson of a board for more than two consecutive one-year terms. The average length of board service as of Fall, 2004, is 5.5 years.³

Appointed Board Members Follow the Same Ethics Laws as Elected Officials --

Appointed college board members already follow the same ethics and financial reporting requirements as elected public officials. Appointed board members file economic interest statements available to the public through the Ethics Board. Appointed board members follow all ethics and conflict of interest rules that apply to other public officials.

Appointed Boards Operate Openly and Publicly -- Technical college boards operate in the light of open and accessible government and follow all of the Wisconsin open meetings and records rules applicable to other forms of local government. College boards provide broad opportunity for public comment and input and assure that public input is sought on budgeting, programming, and other issues.

Appointment Brings a Wide Cross Section of Community Leadership to Boards -- Wisconsin's appointed college boards include top business, labor, and government leaders. Current board members include CEO's and top executives of businesses ranging from some of the state's largest corporations, to small high-tech businesses. Members represent the wide variety of trades and professions that represent technical college programs such as nurses, electricians, tool makers, dairy farmers, auto dealers, bankers, engineers, and economic development professionals. Local appointment under plans of representation brings a unique mix of these professionals to boards in a variety and at a level that matches community needs and college programming.

Board Leaders Include Elected Officials -- By statute, each technical college board includes an elected official such as town, county, village, municipal, or school board member, former and or current state legislator, or a mayor or county sheriff. Also by statute, every board includes a K-12 school district administrator. Both of these board positions promote collaboration and efficiencies between the colleges and local schools and governments.

Wisconsin Technical College Boards Are the State's Key Economic Engine and Return More to the Economy than Any Other Publicly Funded Activity

Technical Colleges Create a Huge Economic Return on the Public Investment Made -- Technical colleges return \$2 in tax revenue for every \$1 of total public investment.⁴ This 2-to-1 payback is fully realized in just 2.2 years.⁴ This impact does not include pre-existing economic activity, only new economic activity and tax revenues created by technical college training itself. Socio-economic research also demonstrates that technical colleges help reduce public outlays for taxpayer-funded social services, healthcare, and corrections costs.⁴ These economic returns are greater than the known benefits demonstrated by any other form of public service or government in Wisconsin.

Technical Colleges Meet the Ever-Changing Variety of Training Needs for All Wisconsin Residents -- Wisconsin technical colleges enroll almost one-half million persons in at least one course each year; year-in and year-out.⁵ This is approximately one in every nine adults each year. Graduates overwhelmingly stay and work in the state - a brain "gain," not "drain," - for the state. Services and programs cover everything from basic literacy and English as a Second Language training, to the very latest in emerging technology.

Custom Business Support -- Colleges also meet specific local community needs through thousands of customized training programs with business and industry, programming offered at district-wide sites in hundreds of locations statewide, and offered flexibly at the time, place, and pace learners require, including by electronic delivery.

Cutting Edge Technology and Offerings -- Wisconsin technical colleges are national and world leaders in providing excellent, accessible, affordable education. Programs are regularly and rapidly tailored to meet changing technology and equipment needs, changing skills, and changing local and regional economies and industry mixes. Colleges have started, ended, or modified more than 500 programs in the past decade or so; an unprecedented rate of change. Every program is created, modified, or ended with ongoing direct involvement of community advisory boards that make recommendations to the college board.

Where Would Wisconsin be Without its Technical College Graduates? -- Technical colleges produce the workers who make and grow Wisconsin's quality of life. No Wisconsinite likely goes through a single day without interacting with or counting on WTCS graduates for their quality of life and for their personal and community safety. We train Wisconsin's firefighters, EMT's, police officers, nurses, utility operators and repair professionals, computer and information technology professionals, aviation mechanics, and dozens of other key professionals meeting today's and tomorrow's needs.

Wisconsin's Appointed Technical College District Boards are Recognized as National Leaders and Role Models

Volunteer Board Members Offer Thousands of Hours of Service Beyond Official Duties - Volunteer technical college board members dedicate thousands of hours to trustee development and education each year. Annually, Wisconsin's 144 college board members complete an estimated 5,000 hours of professional growth and development activities; an average of more than 30 hours per board member annually statewide.⁶ This service is in addition to official board duties and participation in college and community events (estimated at 18,000 – 20,000 volunteer hours annually). Many past and current board members have reported using personal vacation/leave time from their regular jobs to participate in board development activities.

This is a greater collective volunteer commitment than any known cohort of elected local or state officials, and is believed to be as great as the commitment made by any group of technical or community college boards in North America.

Wisconsin's Technical Colleges and Governance Model are Positive National Role Models -- Other states have modeled their college governance model on Wisconsin; the nation's oldest technical education system. For example, North Carolina sent officials to study Wisconsin's technical college system and intentionally modeled its own highly regarded system - including appointed local boards - on Wisconsin. Wisconsin trustees are regularly sought to present at professional growth and education sessions to national and regional colleagues. In 2003, the number of presentations made by Wisconsin board members at the Association of Community College Trustees annual national conference was six times greater than Wisconsin's attendance compared to total national attendance.

Wisconsin Technical Colleges are Recognized and Honored as Leaders in Quality Improvement and in Promoting Partnership and Collaboration

Recognizing Quality in Public Service -- Wisconsin technical colleges, under appointed board leadership, have been awarded more top "quality" awards than any other form of Wisconsin government. The Wisconsin Forward Award is the competitive process paralleling the prestigious national Malcolm Baldrige Awards. Since public entities became eligible for Wisconsin Forward Awards, Wisconsin Technical Colleges have received more top awards than any other industry or service sector, public or private (9 of 70 total awards made at all levels between 1998 and 2003). Technical colleges also account for the majority of all public sector awards at all award levels.⁷

Leaders in Partnership and Collaboration -- Wisconsin's appointed boards are widely regarded as national leaders in promoting partnership and cooperation across local and regional governments, between school and college and university systems, and with business and industry. Partnership, shared services, and collaboration are emerging as the new measurements of excellence in public stewardship. Wisconsin technical colleges already lead the efforts that are emerging as a measure of good government and that will be promoted as a method of making local governments better.

A Thorough Legislative Review Recommended Maintaining Appointed Boards

The Assembly Speaker's Taskforce to Review the WTCS, comprised of legislators and citizens from around the state, completed a thorough year-long review of the WTCS including college governance, funding, mission, service, and accountability to taxpayers. The Taskforce's final recommendations included: "Maintain the current method of appointing members of technical college district boards."⁸

This paper was written by Paul Gabriel, Executive Director, Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association, who is responsible for its content.

Updated November, 2004

End Notes:

1. Kathleen A. Paris, *A Political History of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education in Wisconsin*, WVTAE, Madison, WI, 1985, p.181, 184.
2. Association of Community College Trustees.
3. Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association data.
4. Kjell Christopherson and M. Henry Robison, *The Socioeconomic Benefits Generated by the Wisconsin Technical College System* (executive summary), December 20, 2001.
5. Wisconsin Technical College System Board.
6. Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association data.
7. Wisconsin Forward Award data, www.forwardaward.org.
8. Final Recommendations to the Assembly Speaker, Taskforce to Review the WTCS, Wisconsin State Assembly, November, 2003.



no date

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Technical College District Board Appointment Process Summary

1. District board secretary sends notice of local board vacancies to appointment committee (AC) members confirming positions to be filled. The AC is comprised of all of the district's constituent county board chairpersons (13 districts) or school board presidents (3 districts). AC's range from 2 to 31 members.
2. AC publishes districtwide legal notice of intent to appoint district board members meeting specific criteria and solicits submission of names of candidates. The AC must also send notice to district business, labor and other groups.
3. Candidates must submit name and qualifications including a resume, affidavit, and two written references within 14 days of the notice.
4. AC publishes districtwide legal notices containing names of persons being considered for appointment. Notice must be given at least 14 days before the meeting or hearing.
5. AC notices and holds *at least two public meetings*. The AC first holds a public meeting to discuss/review the district's "plan of representation" and to discuss the names and qualifications of individuals being considered for appointment. Second, the AC holds a public hearing at which: 1) The plan of representation is confirmed/adopted with any changes, and 2) Candidates are interviewed (candidates must be present to be considered), public hearing testimony is taken, and appointments are made. Hearing must be held within 60 days of receiving notice of vacancies.
6. All candidates including incumbent board members must go through the complete public process to be appointed/re-appointed. Appointments must be made following statutes (employers, employees, a local elected official, a school administrator and other factors) and the plan of representation (diversity, gender, geographic representation).
7. Appointment is by majority vote. A quorum consists of AC members from counties/school districts having a combined population greater than 50% of the population of the college district.
8. Within 5 days of making the appointments, the AC chairperson must send written notice of the appointments to the WTCS State Board, which reviews them to make sure they conform to statutory requirements and the district's plan of representation. The State Board approves the appointments in a public meeting.
9. Members take an oath of office at the District Board's organizational meeting on the second Monday in July. Members must register as public officials, file with and follow rules of the Ethics Board, and conduct business fully in compliance with open meeting and open records law.
10. District board members may be removed by the AC in a dully noticed public meeting without cause.