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Details:

(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

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

**2007-08**

(session year)

**Senate**

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

**Committee on ... Labor, Elections and Urban  
Affairs (SC-LEUA)**

**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**

Senate

Record of Committee Proceedings

**Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs**

**Senate Bill 6**

Relating to extension of the right to vote to certain 17-year-old persons and providing for a referendum.

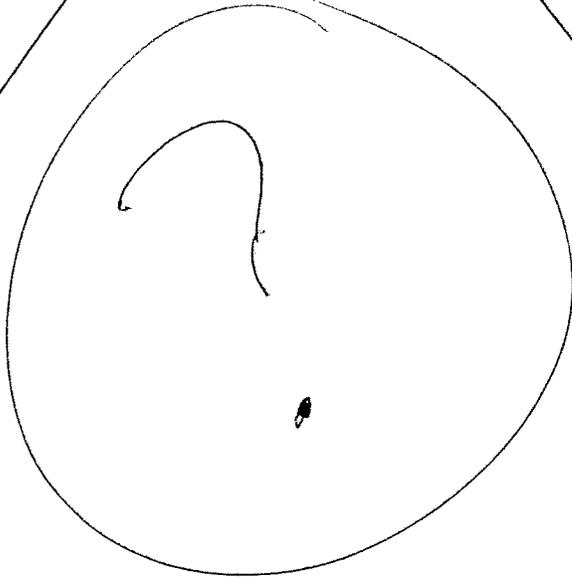
By Senators Risser, Coggs, Lehman, Kreitlow, Vinehout and Breske; cosponsored by Representatives Musser, Pocan, Young, Berceau, Black, Zepnick, Schneider, Molepske, Sheridan, A. Williams and Parisi.

February 20, 2007 Referred to Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs.

March 13, 2008 Failed to pass pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 1.

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Adam Plotkin  
Committee Clerk



**SENATE BILL 6 (LRB -0223)**

An Act to amend 5.02 (16g), 6.02 (1), 6.02 (2), 6.05, 6.22 (6), 6.24 (1), 6.28 (2) (b), 6.94, 7.52 (6) (b), 8.15 (4) (a) and 8.40 (2) of the statutes; relating to: extension of the right to vote to certain 17-year-old persons and providing for a referendum. (FE)

**2007**

- 01-16. S. Introduced by Senators **Risser, Coggs, Lehman, Kreitlow** and **Vinehout**; cosponsored by Representatives **Musser, Pocan, Young, Berceau, Black, Zepnick, Schneider, Molepske, Sheridan, A. Williams** and **Parisi**.
- 01-16. S. Read first time and referred to committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs ..... 38
- 02-01. S. Senator **Breske** added as a coauthor ..... 67
- 02-13. S. Public hearing held.
- 02-13. S. Executive action taken.
- 02-13. S. Report passage recommended by committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs, Ayes 3, Noes 2 ..... 92
- 02-13. S. Available for scheduling.
- 02-19. S. Placed on calendar 2-19-2007 by committee on Senate Organization.
- 02-20. S. Read a second time ..... 105
- 02-20. S. Referred to committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs ..... 105

**2008**

- 03-21. S. Failed to pass pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 1 ..... 735



Moved by Senator Wirch, seconded by Senator Lehman that  
**Senate Bill 6** be recommended for passage.

Ayes: (3) Senators Coggs, Wirch and Lehman.  
Noes: (2) Senators Grothman and A. Lasee.

PASSAGE RECOMMENDED, Ayes 3, Noes 2



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Adam Plotkin  
Committee Clerk



## Vote Record

### Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs

Date: Tue. Feb. 13, 2007

Moved by: Wirch

Seconded by: Lehman

AB \_\_\_\_\_ SB 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Clearinghouse Rule \_\_\_\_\_  
 AJR \_\_\_\_\_ SJR \_\_\_\_\_ Appointment \_\_\_\_\_  
 AR \_\_\_\_\_ SR \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_  
 A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_ to A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_  
 A/S Sub Amdt \_\_\_\_\_  
 A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_ to A/S Sub Amdt \_\_\_\_\_  
 A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_ to A/S Amdt \_\_\_\_\_ to A/S Sub Amdt \_\_\_\_\_

- By recommended for:
- Passage       Adoption       Confirmation       Concurrence       Indefinite Postponement
  - Introduction       Rejection       Tabling       Nonconcurrence

<u>Committee Member</u>	<u>Aye</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Not Voting</u>
<b>Senator Spencer Coggs, Chair</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator Robert Wirch</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator John Lehman</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator Glenn Grothman</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Senator Alan Lasee</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Totals:</b>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	_____	_____

Motion Carried       Motion Failed



# Senate Committee on Labor, Elections, and Urban Affairs

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

- The Committee on Labor, Elections, and Urban Affairs will now come to order
- Roll call
- Any opening remarks — *other cmtes. going on NAT RESOURCES, JCAR, JUDICIARY*
- Talk about procedure for the day
  - Public hearing on appointments and bill, then executive session on the same plus a Clearinghouse Rule dealing with employees of temporary help agencies
  - Know that Rosemay Finora and Carl Theorin are here, Patrick McNamara not able to make it, but his is a re-appointment
- Call the appointments
  - Rosemary Finora, new appointment to Employee Trust Funds Board
  - Carl Theorin, re-appointment to Auctioneer Board
- Testimony on SB 6
  - Risser (lead Senate author) here for sure
  - Rep. Musser (Lead Assembly author) MAY be there
- Roll call for executive session
- Discussion & Roll call on all three appointments
  - Technically it's best to have a separate vote on each, but it is possible to do them en masse
- Discussion & Roll Call on SB 6
- Discussion on Clearinghouse Rule 06-032
  - Ask Russ from Leg. Council for brief application
  - He, or you, can turn it over to Hal Bergen the DWD UI Administrator, for a brief description
  - Either Russ or you can broach the concerns regarding the 1 day notification period (this is the only thing that we'll be bringing up in the meeting)
  - After discussion, roll call on the motion to ask DWD for modifications



SB-6

Public Hrg & Exec 2/13/07 - 10:05A

~~Rosemary Fiora~~

opening remarks from Lasee & Lehman

Rosemary Fiora

- town of Delafield
- some connection to Jenny Donnelly (DOA?)
- familiar w/ benefits pgrms
- already attended 2 mtgs.
- Employee Trust Fund very secure

Carl Theorin (Thoreen)

- lives in Merrill, works in Wausau
- auctioneer for 30 yrs.
  - wood products - forestry
- much work since 1996

- main concern now is internet auctions:

JL - diff. between WI & other states

- licensing requirements different

- oral test in Indiana

- 1700 licensed in WI

- shouldn't be unlicensed

JL - contacts in other states re: internet

- NAOLA (Natl Assn. of Licensed Auctioneers)

- 50% auctions online now

- eBay has lawyer @ their mtgs. now

- eBay fronts newest Fed

- examining their requirement

Theorin cont.

AL - diff. between eBay + live auction?

- live person calls the auction
- auctioneer advertises + handles sale
  - need trust account
- auction industry is regulated + provides education

SB 6

Risser - copy of testimony + articles  
Grothman spoke against on Public Radio  
this week

- is a public referendum too
- would affect 9377 (very rough guess)

Arthur Cole - Riggs

- student council president @ MSN West H.S
- has not talked to anyone opposed in his  
age group

BWR thanks for taking time

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EXEC



## SPECIAL NOTES

02-13-2007

?

- \* Carl Theorin sent letter
  - I called him to confirm receipt
- \* Rosemary Finora called
- \* Matt from Kedzie's office asked for R. Finora's info
  - gave him copy of her cover sheet and resume
  - she's Kedzie's constituent
- \* Mark Pitsch, WI State Journal, called 2/2 to confirm date of hearing on SB 6
  - did article on 2/5
- \* MJS had editorial supporting SB-6 on 2/12
- \* Racine Journal Times editorial supporting SB 6 on 2/8



# FRED A. RISSER

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## Wisconsin State Senator



**For Immediate Release**  
**February 15, 2007**

SB 6  
Folder

**Contact:**  
**Senator Fred Risser**  
**608-266-1627**

### **Committee Recommends Risser Bill to Let 17 Year Olds Vote in Primaries**

(MADISON)—Legislation authored by State Senator Fred Risser (D-Madison) that would extend the right to vote in primary elections to 17 year olds provided they turn 18 by the date of the next general election, was recommended for passage by a key Senate committee.

“I appreciate the committee’s recommendation in favor of this legislation,” Risser said. “Allowing those who will be 18 by the general election to vote in the primary election will give them the chance to participate in the entire election cycle and hopefully get more young adults involved in the political process at an earlier age,” Risser said.

Arthur Kohl-Riggs, President of Madison West High School Student Council, testified in favor of the bill. He noted that his classmates have been very supportive of the idea and being part of the election cycle would be a positive addition to the learning process. His comments appeared to make an impact on the committee members who commented on his testimony during committee debate on the bill.

Risser noted during his testimony that a unique constitutional provision will kick in should this measure be approved by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor. “Because the bill would extend voting rights to a new class of people,” Risser said, “the state constitution requires such a change to be submitted to the voters for their approval.”

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, if Senate Bill 6 is approved by the Legislature and the Governor, and ratified by the voters, Wisconsin would join at least eight other states that permit 17-year -olds to vote in the primary election if the voter will turn 18 by the next general election.

-30-



**Plotkin, Adam**

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**From:** de Felice, David Patrick  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 20, 2007 9:35 AM  
**To:** Plotkin, Adam  
**Subject:** FW: 17-year-old primary voter bill

Packet

**Importance:** High

**Attachments:** 17 Year Old Voting Talking Points.doc; Possible Questions for Fred.doc; Fiscal Bureau Memo on SB6 - Risser.pdf; Risser Hand Out to Senate Committee During Public Hearing.doc; Risser Bill Allow 17 Year Olds To Vote in Primary's.pdf

Here you go.

Dave de Felice  
Office of Sen. Coggs  
608-266-2500 phone  
608-282-3546 fax

SB 6 Folder

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**From:** Tuschen, Terry  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 20, 2007 9:21 AM  
**To:** de Felice, David Patrick  
**Cc:** Tuschen, Terry  
**Subject:** FW: 17-year-old primary voter bill  
**Importance:** High

Hi Dave, here's some good info on that bill. Let me know if you have any questions.  
T



17 Year Old Voting Talking Poi... Possible Questions for Fred.do... Fiscal Bureau Memo on SB6 - Ri... Risser Hand Out to Senate Comm... Risser Bill Allow 17 Year Olds...

\*\*\*\*\*

Terry Tuschen  
Office of State Senator Fred Risser  
220 South, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702  
608.266.1627  
Terry.Tuschen@legis.state.wi.us

## 17 Year Old Voting Talking Points

- The goal of this bill is to increase voter participation by encouraging more young people to get involved in the political process. By allowing some to vote while they are still in high school will, I hope, lay the foundation of civic responsibility that will be carried into adulthood.
- According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least eight other states allow 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections if they turn 18 by the next general election: Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio, Virginia, and most recently Maine which began with the primary held this past June.
- Studies have shown that voting in one election substantially increases the likelihood of voting in the future. That's just common sense - voting can become habit forming. (information on those studies available)
- Voter turnout in primaries is historically very low – generally 20 to 25 percent. The recent primary election was even worse, according to the State Elections Board projections, at 16-percent.
- If an individual can vote in a general election, I don't see any drawback to letting that person vote in the primary election, thus allowing them to participate in the complete election cycle and giving them a say in deciding who the candidates will be.
- Chapter 938.02(10m) states that a 17 year old is automatically considered to be an adult for the purposes of investigating or prosecuting a person who is alleged to have violated a state or federal criminal law or any civil law or municipal ordinance.
- 17 year olds do many things: they work, they pay taxes, they can drive automobiles, and in some cases they can get married and they can serve in the military.

So to argue that 17 year olds are children without the intellectual capacity to make a reasoned decision about a slate of candidates but suddenly attain that capacity six weeks later is ridiculous.

### **How many individuals might be covered under this measure?**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau there were 81,270 17-year-olds in Wisconsin in 2005. So, that pencils out to about 9,377 eligible 17 year-olds.

\*There is roughly 6 weeks between the primary and general elections. So  $81,270 \div 52$  weeks  $\times$  6 weeks = 9,377.

### **What happens when there is a primary election and general election on the same day?**

As drafted, the draft applies to all primaries, including the presidential preference primary, which is always held concurrently with the spring election. Because 17-year olds will not be eligible to vote for other offices or referenda at the spring election, it will be necessary to maintain a separate list of eligible voters and to provide the 17-year olds with separate ballots. There may be some additional costs for this.

Also, if there is a special election or referendum that is held concurrently with another primary, the same situation will occur-- there will be a need for separate lists of eligible voters and separate ballots.

\*I have asked the Legislative Fiscal Bureau to look into possible funding sources the state could use to help offset the additional costs to local election officials.

### **17-year-olds are just kids**

Chapter 938.02(10m) states that a 17 year old is automatically considered to be an adult for the purposes of investigating or prosecuting a person who is alleged to have violated a state or federal criminal law or any civil law or municipal ordinance.



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

One East Main, Suite 301 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 266-3847 • Fax: (608) 267-6873

February 19, 2007

TO: Senator Fred Risser  
Room 220 South, State Capitol

FROM: Paul Onsager, Fiscal Analyst

SUBJECT: Fiscal Effect of 2007 Senate Bill 6: Right to Vote for Certain 17-Year Old Citizens

At your request, this memorandum provides information on the possible fiscal effect of 2007 Senate Bill 6 (SB 6). The provisions of SB 6 would not have a fiscal effect on the cost of administering a spring, general, or special election since a citizen would still have to be 18 years old to vote in such an election. It would, however, expand the number of citizens eligible to vote in primaries to include those 17 year old citizens who would turn 18 years of age as of the election.

The United States Census Bureau estimates that in calendar year 2006 the State of Wisconsin had 79,562 citizens who were 17 years of age. On average (when considering spring and fall general elections), there is approximately seven weeks between the primary and the subsequent election under Wisconsin law. If it is assumed that for any given primary, the provisions of SB 6 would permit about seven out of every 52, 17-year-old citizens to vote in the primary (7 weeks between the primary and general election over a one-year period), SB 6 would have permitted approximately 10,700 additional citizens to have voted in statewide primaries in calendar year 2006. Wisconsin's Department of Administration estimates that in calendar year 2006 there were 4,260,605 Wisconsin citizens age 18 or older who were eligible to vote. As a result, it is estimated that the provisions of SB 6 would expand the number of citizens eligible to participate in statewide or local primaries by one-quarter of one percent.

Local election officials generally print more ballots for an election than they anticipate needing in order to ensure that they will not run short of ballots and deny any citizen the right to vote. Given the modest increase in the number of citizens who would be eligible to vote in primaries under SB 6, and given that local election officials generally print extra ballots, it is not anticipated that local units of government would incur significant ballot printing costs under SB 6. Similarly, it is not anticipated that local units of government would incur significant additional voter registration costs under SB 6. Many of the other local election costs (such as the cost of

leasing polling place space and the cost of purchasing and maintaining voting equipment) are fixed costs that must be paid whenever any election is held, regardless of the level of voter participation.

State Elections Board staff has indicated that the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) would have to be modified to permit 17-year-old citizens (under the circumstances specified in SB 6) to register to vote and to store their records in SVRS. Board staff has indicated, however, that they would not anticipate incurring significant expense in modifying SVRS to comply with SB 6.

I hope this information is of assistance.

PO/lah

# Spencer Coggs



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## State Senator

### *Testimony of State Senator Fred Risser on 2007 Senate Bill 6*

Wisconsin has a proud history of relatively high voter turnout, especially in election years where there is a presidential or governors race on the ballot. However, voter participation in primary elections is typically very low, between 20 to 25 percent. The non-partisan springtime elections also typically see low voter turnout.

Senate Bill 6 would extend the right to vote to 17 year olds provided they turn 18 by the date of the next general election. My goal is simple: to get more young adults involved in the political process at an earlier age and into the habit of voting.

Under my proposal, an individual who will turn 18 by the time of the next general election, and who meets all other qualifications in order to vote, may vote in a primary election for the selection of candidates to be on the ballot at the general election.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least eight other states permit 17-year -olds to vote in the primary election if the voter will turn 18 by the next general election.

The Wisconsin State Constitution stipulates how certain changes to election laws are handled and implementing this change in voter eligibility would not require a constitutional amendment. However, because the Legislature would be extending voting rights to a new class of people, the state constitution requires that the proposed change be submitted to the voters for their approval.

Many individuals under the age of 18 work, pay taxes and are affected by educational and other policy decisions made by elected officials. Allowing and encouraging those who will be 18 by the general election to vote in the primary election will give them a voice in the entire election cycle. Further, it will hopefully lay the foundation for a lifetime of voting and civic participation.

Thank you.

# FRED A. RISSER

Wisconsin State Senator



**For Immediate Release  
October 10, 2006**

**Contact:  
Senator Fred Risser  
608-266-1627**

## **Risser Bill Will Let Some 17 Year Olds Vote in Primary Elections**

(MADISON)—State Senator Fred Risser (D-Madison) is drafting legislation that would extend the right to vote to 17 year olds provided they turn 18 by the date of the next general election.

“Voter turnout in primary elections is typically very low, between 20 to 25 percent. Allowing, even encouraging those who will be 18 by the general election to vote in the primary election will give them the chance to participate in the entire election cycle and hopefully get more young adults involved in the political process and into the habit of voting,” Risser said.

Under Risser’s proposal, an individual who will turn 18 by the time of the next general election, and who meets all other qualifications in order to vote, may vote in a primary election for the selection of candidates to be on the ballot at the general election. Risser noted that a constitutional amendment is not required but the constitution stipulates how certain changes to election laws are handled.

“Because the bill would extend voting rights to a new class of people,” Risser said, “the state constitution requires the Legislature to act to approve such a change first, and then submit the change to the voters for their approval.”

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least eight other states permit 17-year-olds to vote in the primary election if the voter will turn 18 by the next general election. Risser’s bill is being drafted for introduction when the Legislature reconvenes in January 2007.



Date?

FRED A. RISSER  
President  
Wisconsin State Senate



*Testimony of State Senator Fred Risser on 2007 Senate Bill 6*

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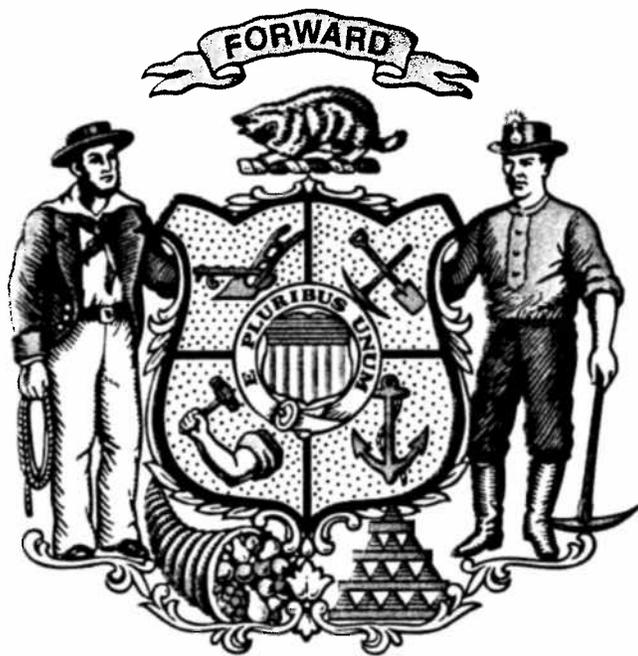
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The Wisconsin State Constitution stipulates how certain changes to election laws are handled and implementing this change in voter eligibility would not require a constitutional amendment. However, because the Legislature would be extending voting rights to a new class of people, the state constitution requires that the proposed change be submitted to the voters for their approval.

Many individuals under the age of 18 work, pay taxes and are affected by educational and other policy decisions made by elected officials. Allowing and encouraging those who will be 18 by the general election to vote in the primary election will give them a voice in the entire election cycle. Further, it will hopefully lay the foundation for a lifetime of voting and civic participation.

Thank you.



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## Bill offers suffrage to some 17-year-olds

SB 6  
Folder

**MARK PITSCH** 608-252-6145  
February 5, 2007

Wisconsin would become one of a handful of states allowing some 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections, under a bill introduced by a Madison lawmaker.

The proposal would allow 17-year-olds who would turn 18 by the date of the general election to vote in the primary.

If passed by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Jim Doyle, the bill would go to a statewide referendum in November 2008. Ratification by voters would make the bill law on Jan. 1, 2009.

"It's good public policy," said Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, the bill's sponsor. "It gives those young people participating in the process a chance to participate in the entire election cycle."

But Senate Minority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, called the idea "ridiculous."

"I think it's crazy. It's ridiculous. Seventeen-year-olds are juveniles," Fitzgerald said. "The premise is flawed, and it makes absolutely no sense to me."

The bill is scheduled for a hearing Feb. 13 before the Senate Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs Committee. Rep. Terry Musser, R-Black River Falls, said he expects to sponsor the bill in the Assembly.

"If there's a 17-year-old who's that interested in voting, why not?" Musser said.

It's unclear exactly how many potential voters the bill would affect, according to the Legislative Reference Bureau. But according to the U.S. Census Bureau there were 81,270 17-year-olds in Wisconsin in 2005.

Because Wisconsin's fall statewide primary is held in September, just weeks before the general election, bill sponsors said only a portion of the state's 17-year-olds would be affected during each election cycle.

**A popular issue** UW-Madison students Sarah Myers, 22, of Minneapolis, and Phil Zaroni, 22, of Madison, said that with birthdays in October, they would have benefited from such a bill and that they support it. Both said they voted in a general election at age 18 but couldn't vote in the primaries.

"I think at that age you're aware of politics," Zanoni said of age 17.

But Jared Gross, 18, a UW-Madison student from Seattle, said he doesn't think 17-year-olds are ready to vote.

"I know when I was 17 I wouldn't have voted. I actually became more interested in politics when I came to college," Gross said.

Making 17-year-olds eligible to vote in primaries if they would turn 18 by the general election has become a popular issue among states in recent years, according to Jennie Bowser, a policy analyst with the National Conference of State Legislatures in Denver.

Eight states currently have such laws, she said: Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio and Virginia.

Others, including California, Kansas, New York, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Connecticut, Illinois, Oregon and Hawaii have considered similar legislation since 2001 but rejected it, she said.

Experts on youth voting said they're not aware of any research that shows allowing some 17-year-olds to vote in a primary election leads to more voter participation among young people.

After decades of declining participation, the percentage of 18- to 29-year-olds who voted increased in the both 2004 and 2006 elections, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at the University of Maryland.

Mark Hugo Lopez, the research director for the center, said the intensity of the 2004 presidential race between President Bush and Sen. John Kerry, and contested state and federal races in 2006 - in addition to high-profile ballot initiatives like the gay-marriage ban in Wisconsin - led to the increases.

"It seems you can get young people to vote if there's something controversial on the ballot," Lopez said.

He supports legislation like that proposed by Risser.

"You want to get young people to vote as soon as possible because once they vote one time they're more likely to vote again," Lopez said.

**Left-leaning youth vote** In Wisconsin, Democratic lawmakers said the youth vote - mobilized by opponents of the successful amendment banning gay marriage - was a key factor in them winning control of the Senate and picking up eight seats in the Assembly.

The 2000 presidential election showed young voters split between Republicans and Democrats, according to CIRCLE. But young voters were increasingly likely to vote for Democrats in 2004 and 2006, the organization said. Allowing some 17-year-olds to vote in primaries could benefit Democrats, Lopez said.

But Jane Eisner, vice president for civic initiatives at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia and an expert on youth voting, said

the bill likely won't mean a boon for Democrats. She said the 1993 federal "motor voter" law, which required states to let people register to vote by mail and provide opportunities to register at many state agencies, was perceived as a way to benefit Democrats but that didn't happen.

"Voters aren't that predictable," Eisner said. "We have to decide as a culture, 'Do we want more people involved in the process?'"

Risser and other Democrats who support his bill said they don't see it as a way to get votes.

Fitzgerald said his objections to the bill weren't based on whether it could provide an advantage to Democrats.

Musser said he believes the youth vote helped Democrats in the 2006 election, but that he's not worried that allowing some 17-year-olds to vote would hurt his party.

He said last year one of his constituents was upset that she was eligible to vote in the general election but unable to vote in the primary because she was 17 then.

Eisner said that if the legislation is enacted it should be accompanied by education in high schools about the importance of voting and even the process of registering, going to the polls and using voting machines.

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**THE BADGER HERALD**

**NEWS**

**17-year-olds could cast ballots in 2009**

by Keegan Kyle

Tuesday, February 6, 2007



The right to vote in Wisconsin primaries would be extended to some 17-year-olds under legislation proposed by a Madison lawmaker.

The bill would allow 17-year-olds who turn 18 by the general election to vote in all primary elections. Federal law currently limits the voting age to 18.

"I think it's good government," said state Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, who drafted the bill. "If a person can vote in the election, he or she should be able to vote in the primary."

Although the bill is not proposed as an amendment to the state's Constitution, it would require the Legislature's approval, the governor's signature and ratification by voters November 2008.

The bill requires a referendum because under the Wisconsin Constitution, the right of suffrage extends to a class of people beyond that which is currently entitled to vote.

If approved by a majority of voters, the bill would become law Jan. 1, 2009, in time for that year's February primaries.

State Rep. Scott Suder, R-Abbotsford, predicted the bill will have a short tenure in the Legislature.

"I don't think the bill has a chance of passing," Suder said. "Frankly, it's kind of goofy."

Suder said he would be in favor of lowering the legal drinking age to 19, but said the standard age of maturity, 18, should be the threshold.

"How can they vote under 18 but not run for office?" Suder added. "I don't see a sound reason for moving it down to 17."

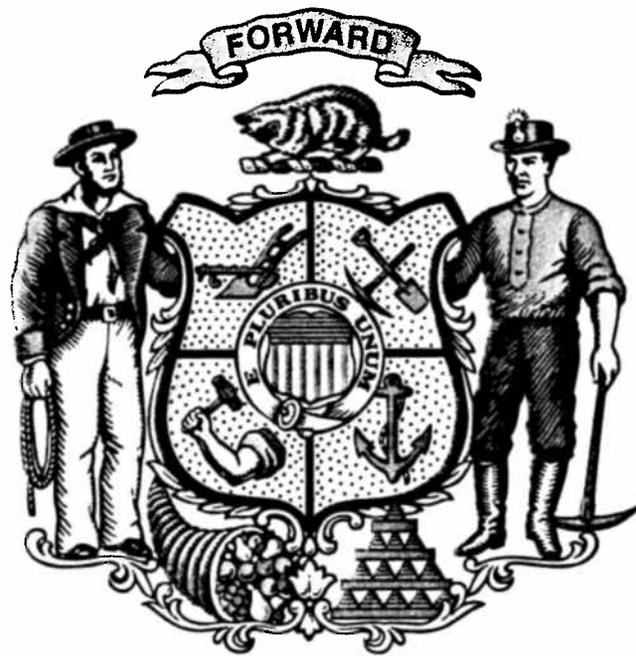
If the bill becomes law, Wisconsin would join eight other states that extend voting rights to 17-year-olds.

"It's worked very well," Risser said. "[They] should have the opportunity to be able to participate in the entire election cycle."

Risser did not introduce the measure as an amendment to the Wisconsin Constitution because he said it would have taken longer and required the approval of two legislative sessions.

"It's a bill, but it's a unique bill," Risser said. "This would permit a person to vote in the spring elections and the presidential primary."

The state Senate Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs is scheduled for a public hearing on the bill Feb. 13 at 10 a.m. in Room 330 Southwest of the Capitol.



# 17-year-old vote plan may boost participation

A piece of legislation that would give Wisconsin 17-year-olds the right to vote in primary elections as long as they turn 18 by the date of the general elections is headed for a hearing next Tuesday.

Predictably, it is drawing some political heat.

State Rep. Scott Suder, a Republican from Abbotsford, labeled it "goofy" and predicted it would get short shrift in the state Capitol.

Another Republican, Senate Minority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, chimed in calling it "crazy" and "ridiculous." "Seventeen-year-olds are juveniles. The premise is flawed and it makes absolutely no sense to me."

"How can they vote under 18 but not run for office?" Suder was quoted as saying, "I don't see a sound reason for moving it down to 17."

Good point, Mr. Representative, but you made it for the other side. You can run for office — in Racine County, at least, and we presume in other parts of the state — just as long as you turn 18 years of age by the time you are sworn into office.

And while Sen. Fitzgerald is correct in noting that 17-year-olds are juveniles, when it serves the state's purposes they can and are waived into adult court to face criminal charges.

State Sen. Fred Risser, a Democrat from Madison, is pushing the bill, and he noted that similar laws are already on the books in eight other states. Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio and Virginia allow 17-year-olds to vote in situations where they will be 18 years old by

the date of the general election.

"It's worked very well," Risser was quoted as saying this week, "[They] should have the opportunity to participate in the entire election cycle."

We suspect the partisan nature of the debate is reflective of the surge in the youth/on-campus turnout in the fall elections that helped deliver the state Senate to Democrats, along with eight Assembly seats. No doubt the perception that this bill could give one party an edge over the other will shade this issue.

But as a policy issue, it simply is good common sense that voters should be part of an entire process. If you can vote for Candidate A in the general election, it stands to reason you should also be able to cast that ballot in the primary where the choices are whittled down.

We don't think the Republic will rise or fall on this issue and we can appreciate that politicians don't want to cede any kind of advantage — no matter how small — to each other in the elections.

But politicians of all stripes should be concerned about the numbers that show young voters in the 18-24 age group have been traditionally at the bottom of the rung when it comes to turnout. In recent elections that age group had less than half the turnout ratio of their elders.

It should be a common goal to boost that participation rate and help "participatory democracy" get more people involved. This would be one way to do that.



## 17-year-old vote may boost participation

SB 6  
Folder

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## Editorial: Old enough to vote

**Yes, some 17-year-olds should be allowed to vote. Ground them if they vote wrong. (We're kidding, but only about the grounding part).**

From the Journal Sentinel

*Posted: Feb. 11, 2007*

He doesn't clean his room. She won't do her homework. But they're still old enough to vote in some circumstances.

The topic is state legislation that would allow 17-year-olds to vote in primaries if they will turn 18 by the general election. Sen. Fred Risser (D-Madison) has introduced the bill. Rep. Terry Musser (R-Black River Falls) has said he will introduce it in the Assembly.

State legislators should approve the measure, which then sets in motion a process for a statewide referendum.

They're too young? Hmm. If their birthday is in October, they are suddenly mature enough in November to vote? What a difference a month makes.

Seventeen-year-olds can enlist in the military, though it takes parental consent. It makes no sense, then, that they should not be able to vote. The arguments against this legislation are reminiscent of the furor when elected officials first suggested that 18-year-olds were old enough to vote.

Though youth voting has surged at times, it's still not where it should be. This might be a way to generate interest earlier in exercising this vital public duty, though a more rigorous emphasis on civics in schools also could help.

Eight states have already allowed this. Wisconsin should follow their lead.

*Should some 17-year-olds be allowed to vote? E-mail [jsedit@journalsentinel.com](mailto:jsedit@journalsentinel.com)*

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From the Feb. 12, 2007 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

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02/12/2007



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ELECTIONS

# Old enough to vote

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**THE BADGER HERALD**

**NEWS**

**Senate debates voting policy**

by Pedro Oliveira Jr.

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

SB 6

A Senate committee approved a bill Tuesday that would extend the right to vote to certain 17-year-olds.

If it passes, Senate Bill 6 will allow individuals who will turn 18 by the time of the next general election to vote in the primary elections.

The bill was presented by Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, and co-sponsored by Rep. Terry Musser, D-Black River Falls.

Risser said the goal is to get young adults to vote and get involved in the political process.

“Many individuals under the age of 18 work, pay taxes and are affected by educational and other policy decisions,” Risser said. “Allowing and encouraging those who will be 18 by the general election to vote in the primary election will give them a voice in the entire election cycle.”

According to Risser, the bill would allow approximately 2,400 young adults to vote in the next primary elections.

Sen. Alan Lasee, R-De Pere, and Sen. Glenn Grothman, R-West Bend, opposed the bill.

Lasee said 17-year-olds are children and should not be allowed to vote. He also added that the bill could provoke further lowering of the voting age.

“If this bill passes, the next move will be to drop the voting age to 16,” Lasee said.

Grothman also told The Badger Herald 17-year-olds are too young to vote.

“[If] 17-year-olds are juveniles for the purpose of contracts, why would we consider them mature enough to vote?” Grothman said.

Grothman said there are other ways for 17-year-olds to get involved in the politics.

“If a 17-year-old wants to get involved in the process, they can always stuff envelopes or go door to door for candidates,” Grothman said. “We need to draw a line somewhere, and the line has been drawn at 18 years old.”

The Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs held a public hearing at the Capitol in which citizens had the chance to express their thoughts on the proposed bill.

During the hearing, Arthur Kohl-Riggs, Student Council President and senior at Madison West High School, said many of his classmates are very interested in the election process and are eager to be part of it.

“It’s hard to gain interest on voting in the general elections once you’ve missed the primary elections,” Kohl-Riggs said. “We discuss a number of social issues during classes and it would be a positive addition to the learning process to actually be part of the elections.”

Similar laws have already been adopted by eight other states, and according to Risser, there have been no complaints. Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio and Virginia already allow soon-to-be 18-year-olds to vote in state primary elections.

The bill will be referred to the Senate and Assembly floors some time next week and, if passed, will be submitted for electoral approval at a statewide referendum. If ratified, it becomes law on Jan. 1, 2009.

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## 17-YR-OLDS INCH CLOSER TO VOTING

Written by Joanna Reilly

Wednesday, 14 February 2007

A bill that would lower the Wisconsin voting age to 17 under specific conditions passed 3-2 in a committee meeting Monday at the Capitol.

Under Senate Bill 6, citizens who reach age 18 by an election will be allowed to vote in the election primary at age 17.

After passing in the committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs, the bill will next be referred to the Scheduling Committee.

State Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, an author of the bill, spoke to the committee Monday along with the student council president from Madison West High School.

"Anything that will encourage young people to participate in politics and get out and vote I think makes good politics," Risser said.

He also praised the speech made by West High's student council president, who pointed out that young people are often very aware and involved with politics.

Mike Prentiss, spokesperson for state Sen. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, said this bill is not something supported by Fitzgerald.

"It's not something we think needs to be changed," Prentiss said. "You've got to draw a line somewhere and no matter where you draw it, there's always going to be someone who's birthday is a day after that election day."

Prentiss also said he thinks more important issues are taking a backseat.

"If you look at the demographic breakdown of younger voters they tend to be among the more liberal sects among the voting population," he said. "I don't want to say there's a partisan motivation at play here but you never can tell."

In response to criticism, Risser said he doesn't see any basis for similar claims.

"Eight states already have this, and it hasn't indicated that it affects the political structure one way or another," Risser said.

Adam Plotkin, clerk for the committee, pointed out that regardless of current support for the bill, the voters still have the final say.

"Even if it passes the entire legislature and even if the governor signs it," Plotkin said. "Because it lowers the voting age, it has to go to a one time referendum before the voters."



State Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, speaks Monday at the Capitol about a bill that will lower Wisconsin's voting age to 17. (Amanda Salm/The Daily Cardinal)

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Wisconsin State Journal  
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## Support primary voting bill

With the ongoing hassle over the budget, a bill that is important to me has fallen through the cracks. Senate Bill 6 would allow people who will be old enough to vote in the 2008 election to vote in the primary.

The primary is the stage at which a voter has the most say in the elections. Too many people have complained about not liking either candidate once they get to the final election, yet the reality is that very few people vote in the primaries.

Many states have already passed similar laws. It's unfair to limit voters' choices because they were born too late in the year.

As a 17-year-old who has watched the last two elections with the frustration of not being able to vote, it is important to me to play a part in the whole democratic process, not just the show-down at the end.

—Victoria Carlson, Madison

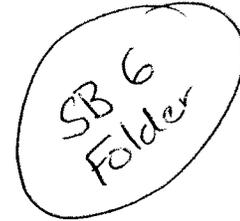




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## Moore misstates voting age

### 17-year-olds can't go to polls today

By PATRICK MARLEY  
[pmarley@journalsentinel.com](mailto:pmarley@journalsentinel.com)

Posted: Feb. 18, 2008

**Madison** - U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore wrongly said on the radio recently that some 17-year-olds can vote in today's presidential primary.

The Milwaukee Democrat said on WMCS-AM (1290) that 17-year-olds who will turn 18 by the Nov. 4 general election are eligible to vote in the primary. But that is inaccurate - all voters must be 18 to cast a ballot today, according to the Government Accountability Board, the state agency that runs elections.

Joel McNally, one of the co-hosts for the station's morning show, said Moore stated on the air last week that some 17-year-olds could vote in the primary. McNally said he repeated that on Monday's show but corrected his statement by the end of the program after hearing from election officials.

Moore called the comment a misstatement Monday and said she had tried to clear up the matter when people who heard her on the radio later contacted her.

"I haven't tried to mislead anyone," Moore said.

Reince Priebus, chairman of the state Republican Party, called the comments irresponsible.

"You've got respected members of Congress spouting out complete inaccuracies, which will encourage underage voters to go out and vote, and that is illegal," he said.

Any 17-year-olds who show up at the polls today will be turned away when they try to register to vote, said Kyle Richmond, a spokesman for the Government Accountability Board.

### Bill was offered

State Sen. Fred Risser (D-Madison) pushed a bill last year that would have allowed primary voting by 17-year-olds who turn 18 by the general election, but he abandoned the bill because of opposition from local election clerks.

At least eight states allow primary voting for 17-year-olds, according to Risser's office.

Moore has endorsed U.S. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) in the presidential contest.

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From the Feb. 19, 2008 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
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