

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

June 30, 2021

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing **Assembly Bill 173** in its entirety.

This bill would generally prohibit any county or municipality from applying for or accepting any non-governmental grants or donations for election administration. The bill would allow the Wisconsin Elections Commission to accept a private donation or grant intended for municipalities unless the grant stipulates specific purposes for use or contains a requirement to repay for any reason. The commission would have to distribute the funding to each municipality on a per capita basis to offset the municipality's election administration expenses, with all receiving at least \$25, and only with the approval of the Joint Committee on Finance. Finally, the bill would create new requirements for serving as an election tabulator and new restrictions regarding who can serve as a poll worker.

I am vetoing this bill because I object to restrictions on local governments potentially using supplemental funding for election administration. During the coronavirus pandemic, our state and local election officials performed admirably to ensure the 2020 elections in each of our communities were conducted freely, fairly, and in accordance with our election laws. Counties, towns, villages, and cities across the state—both big and small, urban and rural—received non-governmental grants, which helped them conduct safe elections under extraordinary circumstances. In accordance with election laws, these resources were used to pay poll workers and purchase personal protective equipment and supplies, thereby keeping our elections safe for poll workers and voters alike.

Regardless of the source of additional funding for election administration, election administrators must always run elections according to state and federal law. Our election laws are robust and lay out clear procedures for how municipal and county officials must administer an election, a process that is not threatened by a municipality applying for and accepting additional resources. By generally prohibiting donations or grants, this bill unnecessarily restricts the use of resources that may be needed to ensure elections are administered effectively. Finally, the acceptance and expenditure of a grant would also be governed by statutory provisions that dictate how amendments to municipal budgets must be noticed and approved, thereby ensuring transparency for interested parties.

Respectfully submitted,
TONY EVERS
Governor of Wisconsin