



EDWARD BROOKS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Testimony – AB 161

April 21, 2015

Mr. Chair and Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of Assembly Bill 161 (AB 161).

Current law for town boards under Wisconsin Statute §82.03(2), requires that the board provide all necessary equipment, supplies, and work to maintain and repair highways and bridges within their jurisdiction. In fact, I spent this past Friday morning touring the roads in the Town of Reedsburg assessing need for maintenance and repair. The statutes go on to limit what the town board can spend on these projects.

Town boards set an annual budget and hold an annual meeting of the electors to vote on the budget. During the course of the year, if the town needs to exceed the allotted amount for road repair, the board now must notice a meeting of the board followed by noticing a full elector meeting to approve the change. This process may take a month or two. It is this cumbersome requirement that is only incumbent upon town boards and no other local government for which AB 161 seeks to repeal.

AB 161 also repeals the \$5,000 limit giving town boards the ability to fully estimate the costs to maintain and repair highways and bridges in their jurisdiction one time for electors to approve or disprove. Town boards then may, if necessary, modify their budget during the course of the year by vote of the board only while adhering to levy limits.

Assembly Bill 161 is a proposal supported by the Wisconsin Towns Association as a practical measure allowing more efficiency for town boards to manage budgets. It repeals Wisconsin Statute §82.03(2).

I appreciate your support of Assembly Bill 161, and I am happy to answer any questions you have.

Public Hearing, AB 161 (SB)118

Tuesday, April 21, 2015

Committee on Urban and Local Affairs

Room 400 Northeast

Comments by:

Sharon L. Leair, Genesee Town Chair

Board Member WTA Urban Towns Committee

Chairman Waukesha County Unit WTA

Regarding AB 161 eliminating \$5,000 per mile limit on Town Board authority to spend only \$5,000 per mile on town highways without town elector meeting approval under Section 82.03 (2).

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1. The high cost of asphalt, road maintenance and construction costs makes the existing per mile limit under the current law antiquated and impractical. The costs change every year; but as an example, this year the cost for the Town of Genesee to reconstruct one mile of road is approximately \$186,000.00, with a projected 20 year life. A resurfacing or overlay would cost about \$110,000.00 for one mile with a projected 10 year life, and chip sealing would cost about \$32,000.00 a mile, with a projected five year life.
 2. The tax levy has already been approved for highway costs at the town budget meeting in the previous year, so having to exceed the approved highway budget would not create new taxes, but would necessitate a shifting of other available funds within the budget or in case of a major weather event or unexpected road emergency it may require moving some funds from the general operating budget to cover some costs.
 3. To call a special meeting of the electorate would involve time and unnecessary expenditure of publishing meeting notices and bringing the public in on an issue they expect us to handle without delay, since they have already approved the levy.
 4. Our job as elected officials is to make sure our highway system is safe and passable and we need to make sure that happens in an expedient manner, especially in case of emergency.
 5. Highway budgets, as with other budgets, are projections of what we anticipate spending based on our best efforts and past experience. A winter with large amounts of snowfall, a road that fails to hold up for that extra year or two you expected it would or a failed culvert that causes a road collapse or flooding can change the budget picture overnight and we need to be able to address these things in an efficient manner. This is what our constituents expect of us.
 6. I am not sure why this limit was put into place decades ago to just apply to towns and no other government entity, but regardless, it needs to be eliminated for the reasons stated and on behalf of those I represent, I respectfully request your support of AB 161.

Sharon L. Leair