



SHANNON ZIMMERMAN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 30th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Chairman Tusler and Committee Members,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 168. This was the idea of a constituent of mine, and I want to thank him for bringing this to my attention.

Current law requires voters to state their full names and addresses to poll workers before receiving a serial number (the step prior to receiving a ballot), while anyone who refuses to give their name and address cannot vote. Stating your name and address benefits election observers, helping ensure the integrity of our elections.

However, there is no explicit accommodation for those with disabilities who have trouble speaking. Disability Rights Wisconsin shared several stories about the speaking requirement, including a mother who took her deaf son to vote and had to argue with poll workers to allow him to vote, and another of a man with disabilities being told he could not vote because he couldn't state his name and address aloud.

This is absurd. We have laws on the books providing for accommodation, such as allowing any person with a disability to request accommodations from their clerk, or helping voters with disabilities, or those unable to read, write or understand English, in marking their ballots. These situations obviously deserve their own exemption.

On March 11, 2019, the Accessibility Advisory Committee of the Wisconsin Elections Commission requested support for "*... legislative changes to allow voters with disabilities to receive assistance from an election inspector or another individual to satisfy the statutory requirement to state the voter's name and address before receiving a ballot.*"

AB 168 does just this, putting in law that when a voter is unable to state their name and address due to a disability, they may present their ID to the election official to be verified and then, either the election official or the person helping the voter, may state the voter's name out loud to meet the requirement.

The bill has been carefully worded. The requirement to state the name aloud will still be met. The bill allows either a poll worker or assistant to the voter to state the name, which accounts for a situation where a person with disabilities does not have an assistant. Finally, rather than spelling out what a disability is, the term is left broad so as not to require poll workers to diagnose a voter before waiving this requirement.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Leg Council
Copy

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
JONATHAN BROSTOFF
19TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Testimony in Support of AB 168: Requirement for Stating Name and Address
prior to Voting**

Chairman Tusler, distinguished members of the Committee, and fellow citizens,

I thank you for the opportunity to come before the Committee this afternoon to speak in support of Assembly Bill 168. I come to you today not only as a State Representative and co-author of this bill, but as a citizen of our great state who recognizes the great privilege and pride that comes with voting in our elections. Furthermore, I firmly believe that that pride and privilege deserve to be shared by all citizens of our great State, regardless of circumstance or ability.

For most Wisconsinites, voting is a simple act, free of pitfalls and challenges; however, this is currently not the case for a number of our fellow citizens. For some voters with disabilities, the existing requirement to *vocalize* one's name and address before receiving their ballot adds an undue burden to the voting process -- some disabilities render the act of speaking either overly difficult or even impossible, and being forced to speak in order to receive a ballot may also present a trigger for past traumatic events where individuals with difficulties speaking were coerced into doing so. That many of our neighbors face these difficulties each and every time they try to exercise their fundamental Constitutional right to vote is shameful, and it is past time for this disparity to be addressed.

AB 168 would provide an alternative for those individuals whose disabilities preclude them from speaking to the existing requirement that voters state their name and address before being allowed to vote. Not only would this small change provide a simple way to protect and preserve the franchise for these voters with disabilities, but it also has precedent in statute: voters for whom it could be unsafe to publicly state their name and address (such as victims of domestic abuse, stalking, or sexual assault) are allowed to vote upon presenting proper identification -- without the need to state their name and address. It makes sense that passage of a similar alternative, such as that provided by AB 168, be extended to those voters whose circumstances render the existing law fundamentally disenfranchising.

I urge the Committee to vote yes on AB 168, and protect the franchise for disabled Wisconsin voters. We owe it to not only our fellow Wisconsinites, but to our very democratic ideals as Americans.

Thank you for your time, and for your consideration of this important legislation.



PATTY SCHACHTNER
STATE SENATOR

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 168
The requirement for stating name and address prior to voting

Chairman Tusler and Committee Members:

Thank you for holding a hearing on this important bill, which will allow a voter who is unable to state their name due to a physical disability, to have the election official, or another person selected by the voter, state the voter's name and address after the voter's identification documents have been verified. Today I submit written testimony to express support for this proposal because it is important that all citizens have the equal opportunity to have their votes and voices heard.

Following discussions with a constituent from Hudson who lives with Cerebral Palsy and an additional contact from a student at UW – River Falls, I reached out to the Wisconsin Elections Commission and Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW). While the Americans with Disabilities Act requires governmental services to be provided to all qualified voters regardless of their abilities/disabilities, constituents from Senate District 10 and DRW shared that this was not always the case. There are some Wisconsin Statutes that address the voting process for voters with disabilities, including: Section 5.36, Stats., which provides that any individual with a disability may request a specific type of accommodation from a clerk that will facilitate his or her voting, Section 6.33 (2)(a), Stats., which relates to completing a voter registration application, and Section 6.82, Stats., which provides that voters who are unable to read or write, understand English, or are unable to mark a ballot due to disability may have assistance in casting their votes. However, there are no statutes that express an exemption for individuals with a disability to be exempted from stating their name or permitted to have assistance with this portion of the voting process.

In addition to hearing the heartfelt stories of individuals who have experienced difficulty participating in voting due to a disability, I learned that this experience is not limited to only constituents in Senate District 10 but rather all across the state. From first time voters who are hard-of-hearing, deaf, or nonverbal to individuals who have suffered a stroke and are unable to state their name, this is an issue impacting many in our state. I am proud to support Assembly Bill 168 which will help ensure that all voters, regardless of ability will have access to fully participate in the voting process.

I strongly encourage you to support this proposal. Thank you for your consideration.

SERVING WISCONSIN'S 10TH SENATE DISTRICT

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Testimony of Meagan Wolfe
Interim Administrator
Wisconsin Elections Commission

Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections
April 23, 2019

Room 412 East, State Capitol
Public Hearing

Chairperson Tusler and Committee Members:

Thank you for the invitation to provide testimony on behalf of the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) regarding the two bills up for a hearing today. Assembly Bill 168 relates to the requirement for stating name and address prior to voting and Assembly Bill 64 relates to reimbursements to counties and municipalities for certain special election costs.

Regarding AB 168, the six member, bi-partisan Wisconsin Elections Commission has voted unanimously to add changes to the voter name and address requirement to its legislative agenda and has asked WEC staff to work with the legislature to pursue this change.

Regarding AB 64, the Commission is aware of the proposed legislation, but has not discussed it in any depth or taken a position on the bill, so the testimony provided will be for information only.

Assembly Bill 168

Wis. Stat. § 6.79(2) states that before receiving a ballot at the polling place, each voter must state his or her name and address. Periodically, we hear from voters with disabilities who are unable to verbally state their name and address.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires governmental services to be provided to all qualified voters. Because of this requirement, WEC staff has advised voters and clerks that voters who are unable to speak their name and address due to a disability should still receive a ballot.

In practice, this means that the voter's name and address are verified and stated in another way. For example, the election inspector may announce the information on behalf of the voter. Also, another individual assisting the voter may state the voter's name and address. These alternatives accomplish the statutory goals of voters providing their name and address and permitting election observers to hear that information for each voter.

Several statutes permit voters to receive assistance during various stages of the voting process, including completing a registration application, requesting an absentee ballot, and marking a ballot. Also, Wis. Stat. § 5.36 states that individuals with a disability may notify their municipal clerk to request a specific type of accommodation at the polling place. The statutes do not specifically address assistance with the requirement to state a voter's name and address, especially without notifying the municipal clerk in advance.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission has an Accessibility Advisory Committee, comprised of organizations which work with and advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Our staff discussed this issue with the Accessibility Advisory Committee at its meeting on February 27, 2019. Committee members expressed concerns with the potential that election inspectors may strictly apply the requirement for voters to state their name and address and deny a ballot to voters who are unable to verbalize that information. There is also the potential that this requirement may discourage individuals from voting in the first place.

Some members of the Committee advocated for completely removing the requirement for all voters. Our staff talked with them about transparency in the voting process and why election observers need to hear voters' names and addresses. After some discussion, the Committee adopted a motion asking the Elections Commission to request a change in the statutes to specifically address the requirement. The Committee passed the following motion:

The Accessibility Advisory Committee requests that the WEC support legislative changes to allow voters with disabilities to receive assistance from an election inspector or another individual to satisfy the statutory requirement to state the voter's name and address before receiving a ballot, and work with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Legislature to enact such legislation.

As I mentioned earlier, the Commission received the Accessibility Advisory Committee's motion and unanimously voted to include this issue in its legislative agenda.

Assembly Bill 64

2019 Assembly Bill 64/ Senate Bill 71 would require the Elections Commission to reimburse counties and municipalities for costs of certain special elections. As I mentioned earlier, the Wisconsin Elections Commission has not discussed this proposed legislation in any depth and has not taken a position on it. The WEC has not solicited feedback from local election officials on this matter, so I am only able to provide information on this bill from the state level perspective.

In analyzing this bill and preparing a fiscal estimate, our staff looked at these questions:

- How do we determine if the categories of election costs collected between 2012-2016 correspond to the categories outlined in the bill?

- How would we know whether the costs submitted by clerks are reasonable?
- And, how much will it cost our agency to administer the program?

The question of “how much do elections cost?” is a question that legislators and members of the public have long asked. Answering that question has always been difficult, in part, because Wisconsin has the most decentralized election administration system in the United States.

Wisconsin law places most of the fiscal burden of elections on our 72 county clerks and 1,850 municipal clerks. Their financial responsibilities include printing ballots, hiring election inspectors, renting polling places if necessary, and publishing election notices. Municipalities must also plan for the purchase of electronic voting equipment, which can significantly impact local budgets. Because local taxpayers are responsible for most election administration costs, the state has historically had very little reliable information about those costs.

Absent specific statutory authority to collect election administration cost data, the G.A.B. began requiring county and municipal clerks to report actual election administration costs. They did this under the general authority to collect data for the Election Voting and Registration Statistics Report. These reports started with the 2012 recall elections and continued through the November 2016 General and Presidential Election. The reports are available on our website:

<https://elections.wi.gov/publications/statistics/el-190>.

Completing election cost reports has never been a popular requirement with county and municipal clerks, and the quality of data we received from them varied greatly. In response to clerks’ concerns about the amount of time required to complete the cost reports, our staff modified the reporting process and provided clearer instructions and definitions of the cost categories in 2016.

In 2017, our staff surveyed clerks about ways to improve the cost reporting process. We recommended changing from cost reports about each election to twice-yearly reports. At its September 2017 meeting, the Commission discussed the issue at length. The two former clerks on our Commission shared their experiences with the cost reports and expressed concerns about the accuracy of the cost figures and the burden of producing them. Commissioners also expressed concerns about the burden on WEC staff to collect and review the information and the lack of a specific mandate to collect it. The Commission voted unanimously to end the requirement for clerks to report any cost data.

Here is what we learned from the unaudited data that clerks reported between 2012-2016:

- The 2012 Recall Primary (Office of Governor) cost \$6,307,911.12.
- The 2012 Recall Election (Office of Governor) cost \$7,111,830.45.
- The 2014 General Election cost \$8,045,072.57.
- The 2016 Presidential Preference and Spring Election cost \$5,556,898.04
- The 2016 Presidential and General Election cost \$7,919,164.57.

If this bill becomes law and there is a statewide special election, based on this data, the state could expect to reimburse clerks for several million dollars in costs. However, as you know, there have been very few statewide special elections. It is more likely that this legislation would come into play for special elections to fill vacancies in state Senate and Assembly seats.

If the WEC was directed to reimburse local election offices for other state level offices, such as Assembly and Senate races, we would need to collect costs specific to these election types. When preparing the fiscal estimate for this bill, WEC staff discussed the possibility of deducing the cost of a smaller election by determining a per-electoral cost to adjust for the scale of an election for a smaller jurisdiction, but several of the cost categories identified in Assembly Bill 64 have static costs that do not change depending on turnout.

According to our records, over the past two decades, there have been 29 special elections ordered for state offices, not including recall elections. This number does not include any special primaries associated with the special elections, so the total number of special elections and primaries would be higher. Three of the 29 special elections appear to have been held concurrently with regularly-scheduled elections. Several of the primaries appear to have been held concurrently with Spring Elections.

From the bill, it is not clear whether the authors intended for reimbursements to apply to recall elections. It would be helpful if clarifying language is added to ensure the Commission is not put in a position of determining the will of the legislature.

In addition to the costs to county and municipal clerks, another significant cost associated with this legislation would be the cost to the WEC to administer the reimbursements. We estimate that processing each reimbursement request, including determining the reasonableness of each request as required by the bill, would take an average of one hour of staff time per submission. For a statewide special primary or election, the effects of this bill would result in an additional, estimated cost of more than 2,000 staff hours at a median rate of \$27/hour plus fringe benefits and supplies, for a total estimated cost of \$90,000. For special primaries or elections for legislative offices, the administrative cost to process each submission would be similar. The total cost would depend on the number of jurisdictions included in the district.

Because of the additional administrative costs to the WEC, I would suggest that Section 2 of the bill specifying "A sum sufficient to reimburse counties and municipalities for certain special primary or election costs" be amended to specifically include the WEC's costs to administer the reimbursement program. This would be in line with the Legislature's recent action to amend state statutes regarding recounts. The Legislature now allows the WEC to recoup its recount-related administrative costs when the candidate requesting a recount does not qualify for a taxpayer-funded recount.

For example, in the upcoming special election in Assembly District 64 on April 30, there are two counties, Kenosha and Racine, and six municipalities, the City of Kenosha, Town of Somers, Village of Somers, City of Racine, Village of Elmwood Park, and the Village of Mount Pleasant.

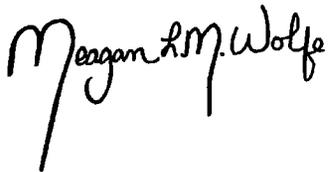
In legislative districts with less population density, the number of municipalities seeking reimbursement could increase significantly.

One of the requirements for reimbursement is that the commission “determines that the rate paid by the county or municipality for the cost does not exceed the rate customarily paid for similar costs at a primary or election that is not a special primary or election.” To make that determination, the commission would need data about the rates customarily paid for goods and services. However, these rates can vary based on several factors, including what part of the state the county is located in, whether it is urban or rural, what type of ballots and electronic voting equipment are used, and the terms of any current agreements for voting equipment programming and polling place rentals.

Studying these local election costs is not something the WEC staff has done before, and there would be a significant amount of staff time involved in determining what reasonable costs are for reimbursement purposes. As I mentioned earlier, the Wisconsin Elections Commission directed staff to stop collecting cost information from county and municipal clerks in 2017. While the bill does not specifically require the WEC to resume collecting cost data from all clerks, doing so would be one method of establishing benchmarks for reasonable costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee on these bills. I will be happy to respond to your questions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meagan M. Wolfe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'M' and 'W'.

Meagan Wolfe
Interim Administrator
Wisconsin Elections Commission
608-266-8005 / meagan.wolfe@wi.gov



WISCONSIN BOARD FOR PEOPLE
WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

April 17, 2019

Representative Tusler
Chair, Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections
Wisconsin State Capitol, Rm 22 W
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Tusler and Committee members:

The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) thanks the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Assembly Bill 168.

AB 168 makes common sense changes to Wisconsin's law that benefits voters with disabilities who communicate nonverbally and voters with developmental or physical disabilities that affect verbal speech to the degree that an election official may have difficulty understanding the voter's communication. Forms of photo identification used by voters include the voter's name, and most include the person's address. The bill's allowance for the election official or another person chosen by the voter to state the voter's name on behalf of the voter with a disability provides the required verification that the voter is correctly identified on the poll or separate list.

BPDD is charged under the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act with advocacy, capacity building, and systems change to improve self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life for people with developmental disabilities (more about BPDD https://wi-bpdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Legislative_Overview_BPDD.pdf).

Our role is to seek continuous improvement across all systems—education, transportation, health care, employment, etc.—that touch the lives of people with disabilities. Our work requires us to have a long-term vision of public policy that not only sees current systems as they are, but how these systems could be made better for current and future generations of people with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Swedeen".

Beth Swedeen, Executive Director
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities

**Disability Rights Wisconsin Comments on AB 168
Assembly Committee on Campaign and Elections
Barbara Beckert, Director Milwaukee Office & HAVA Coordinator
April 23, 2019**

Thank you, Chairman Tusler, Vice Chair Sanfelippo, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of Disability Rights Wisconsin regarding the need for legislative changes to Wisconsin's requirement for voters to state their name and address to receive a ballot. Thank you also to Representative Zimmerman for your leadership in advancing AB 168, and to the co-sponsors of this legislation for your efforts to address a significant barrier for some Wisconsin voters who have a disability that impacts their ability to speak.

Background. Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) is the designated federally mandated protection and advocacy agency for Wisconsin, established in 1977. DRW receives funding as part of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) to provide education, training, and assistance to individuals with disabilities to promote their full participation in the electoral process, including registering to vote, casting a vote and accessing polling places. We provide training, resource materials, and advocacy assistance, including staffing the Disability Rights Wisconsin Voter Hotline.

Much of our voting work is advanced collaboratively through the *Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition* (WDVC), which is coordinated by DRW in partnership with the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD). The coalition is a non-partisan effort to help ensure full participation in the entire electoral process of voters with disabilities.

DRW has worked with the Wisconsin Election Commission to provide education and to address barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in the electoral process. I serve on the WEC Accessibility Advisory Committee which has endorsed the need for legislative changes to Wisconsin's requirement for voters to state their name and address to receive a ballot.

Request for Legislative Change to Requirement for Voters to State Name and Address

Today, we ask you to support AB 168 to address a barrier to voting for some voters with disabilities. We request this change because of the concerns we have heard from some voters with disabilities and family members about the troubling and discriminatory impact of current Wisconsin law requiring voters to say their name and address before receiving a ballot (Section 6.79 (2)(a)). Some voters cannot state their name and address due to disability or medical condition; Wisconsin law does not require a disability related accommodation for these voters.

For the November election, DRW received 6+ contacts related to concerns about this requirement for voters who were deaf or had a developmental disability and could not speak their name and

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address. In these cases, poll workers were initially insistent that voters say their name and address. In one case, the poll worker told a deaf voter that they would not receive a ballot unless the voter stated both name and address. In another case, a family member reported that a young man with a developmental disability had difficulty receiving a ballot because he could not speak his address. It is highly likely that other voters had similar experiences but did not contact DRW. This document includes some of the concerns we have heard from voters with disabilities and their families in their own words. In some cases, we heard that the person with a disability was humiliated and shamed by the treatment experienced at their polling place, as they tried to fulfill their civic duty.

Voting is one of our nation's most fundamental rights and a hallmark of our democracy. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local governments as public entities to ensure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote. The ADA's provisions apply to all aspects of voting, including voter registration, site selection, and the casting of ballots, whether on Election Day or during an early voting process. The ADA requires public entities to modify their voting policies, practices, and procedures when such modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of a voter's disability. The current statutory requirement in Wisconsin law requiring voters to state their name and address does not address the needed modifications, and in some cases is being implemented in a matter that is discriminatory.

Recommendation for Legislative Change

Today we ask you to address these discriminatory practices by supporting AB 168 which permits individuals who cannot state their name and address to have an election official or another individual selected by the voter state the name and address for them. Under current Wisconsin law, there is not a requirement to provide an accommodation; this is in conflict with requirements of the American with Disabilities Act.

Legislative Change Must be Supported by Comprehensive Education

Changing the law is a first step in correcting this discriminatory practice. To ensure that voting is truly accessible to Wisconsin voters who have a disability, it is essential to develop and implement a comprehensive education effort for election officials, poll workers, people with disabilities, and other stakeholders to communicate this change. To ensure that voters with disabilities are not discriminated against and receive needed accommodations, the education plan should address training, the accessibility checklist, signage, and other postings at each polling place.

DRW and the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition are committed to working with the WEC to develop and advance this essential education, and monitor this change to ensure the voting process is truly accessible to all voters.

Comments from Voters with Disabilities and Family Members

To inform your consideration of AB 168, we ask you to consider these comments from voters with disabilities and family members. We want to thank each of them for sharing their experiences and helping to advance this change. In particular I want to thank disability advocate Ramsey Lee who took a leadership role in sharing these concerns with his legislators, Representative Zimmerman and Senator Schachtner.

Comments DRW Received from Deaf Voters regarding the November 2018 election

- *Can someone educate all the polling site and informed them that they should not force a Deaf person to speak, they already show their driver license with picture and if a must speak instead of speaking, write their full name? I also want to point out that forcing someone who is Deaf to speak may cause some trauma triggers for some people who may have been traumatized being force to speak while growing up.*
- *So the procedure at my polling place is to recite your name and address aloud, then show a picture ID. I asked what the procedure was for people whose disability prevented them from speaking. The pollster told me that "people like that" come with a caregiver or interpreter. I asked what they would do if there was no caregiver and the person was perfectly capable of communicating that information another way. They looked shocked and said that they would have to call a supervisor, but that kind of thing would probably never happen. So, if you can't verbally recite your name and address, be sure to bring a caregiver with you or you will find yourself at the mercy of the people who trained my highly enlightened pollsters.*
- *At vote location. She demanded my name and address even I gave her my driver license with picture of me. I told her I'm deaf. She was still demanded my voice. I told her here was my driver license. Still wanted my voice so I signed to her without my voice. She accepted.*

Comments Shared with DRW from the Parent of a Deaf Voter

I told the poll worker my son is deaf and I was assisting him in voting. The poll worker took his driver's license and confirmed that the information was correct. She then told me my deaf son had to orally state his name and address. I was surprised and repeated to her that he's deaf and communicated by sign language and not orally. The poll worker insisted that he speak before being allowed to proceed to vote. I objected citing this as voter discrimination and an ADA violation. The poll worker disagreed and said I could take up the issue with the polling place manager. I communicated this to my son through sign language. He couldn't understand why he had to try to use his voice and he refused. He was clearly embarrassed and confused by this insensitive and ridiculous requirement. Finally another poll worker handed me a piece of paper so my son could obtain a ballot and vote. While he was voting I went to the poll manager to complain about this requirement. The first thing the poll manager asked me was whether I told the poll worker my son

was deaf? I said of course it's the first thing I said when we went up to the table. That question seemed to reflect the ignorance to disabilities on display at this polling place. I had to insist that he file this incident in his report and noted that this requirement for a deaf voter to have to orally state their name and address should not apply to deaf people trying to vote. I cannot believe the poll workers were not at least minimally trained to address disabled voters. The sign at the table stating a person had to state their name and address is also preposterous and needs to be reviewed when it comes to deaf people trying to exercise their right to vote. It's clear to me that my son would not have been able to vote if I wasn't there to advocate for him and that's just plain wrong.

Sister of a Voter with a Developmental Disability Who Contacted DRW (Nov. 2018)

She shared an experience where poll workers would not let her brother with a disability vote since he could not independently recite his address. She contacted DRW for assistance, to better understand his rights to vote and whether it was required for him to speak his address. DRW followed up with the WEC for assistance, and with the sister who had contacted us, to share guidance from WEC staff.

Comments DRW Received from Disability Advocate Ramsey Lee:

I have been informed that currently under Wisconsin law statute 6.79(2)(a) requires voters to state their name and address before receiving a ballot to vote. This could become a challenge for voters who are non-verbal and or have a hard time hearing. I have Cerebral Palsy myself and sometimes it is hard for people to understand me. I am doing this not for myself, I am doing this so that Wisconsin voters with disabilities can fully participate in the voting process. ... this requirement could be problematic for people that are non-verbal, have a hard time speaking, or who are deaf. I am working on it as a citizen because I care about all people of Wisconsin and I was wondering if we could get a modification or a change to the Legislative statute to amend the Legislation so that reasonable accommodations can be made for voters who might not be able to state their name and address due to disability. This will help insure all voters can have full access and participate in the voting process seamlessly.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. Please let us know what additional information is needed, and how we can work together to increase access and remove barriers for voters with disabilities, to advance their full participation in the electoral process.

For information, please contact:

- Barbara Beckert, Disability Rights Wisconsin Milwaukee Office Director and HAVA Coordinator, 414-773-4646, barbara.beckert@drwi.org



The Americans with Disabilities Act and Other Federal Laws Protecting the Rights of Voters with Disabilities

Voting is one of our nation's most fundamental rights and a hallmark of our democracy. Yet for too long, many people with disabilities have been excluded from this core aspect of citizenship. People with intellectual or mental health disabilities have been prevented from voting because of prejudicial assumptions about their capabilities. People who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids, such as walkers, have been unable to enter the polling place to cast their ballot because there was no ramp. People who are blind or have low vision could not cast their vote because the ballot was completely inaccessible to them.

Important federal civil rights laws were enacted to combat such forms of discrimination and protect the fundamental right to vote for all Americans. This document provides guidance to states, local jurisdictions, election officials, poll workers, and voters on how the Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal laws help ensure fairness in the voting process for people with disabilities.

FEDERAL LAWS PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** is a federal civil rights law that provides protections to people with disabilities that are similar to protections provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. Title II of the ADA requires state and local governments ("public entities") to ensure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote. The ADA's provisions apply to all aspects of voting, including voter registration, site selection, and the casting of ballots, whether on Election Day or during an early voting process.

The **Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA)** also contains provisions relevant to the voting rights of people with disabilities. The VRA requires election officials to allow a voter who is blind or has another disability to receive assistance from a person of the voter's choice (other than the voter's employer or its agent or an officer or agent of the voter's union). The VRA also

prohibits conditioning the right to vote on a citizen being able to read or write, attaining a particular level of education, or passing an interpretation “test.”

The **Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 (VAEHA)** requires accessible polling places in federal elections for elderly individuals and people with disabilities. Where no accessible location is available to serve as a polling place, voters must be provided an alternate means of voting on Election Day.

The **National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA)** aims, among other things, to increase the historically low registration rates of persons with disabilities. The NVRA requires all offices that provide public assistance or state-funded programs that primarily serve persons with disabilities to also provide the opportunity to register to vote in federal elections.

The **Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)** requires jurisdictions responsible for conducting federal elections to provide at least one accessible voting system for persons with disabilities at each polling place in federal elections. The accessible voting system must provide the same opportunity for access and participation, including privacy and independence, that other voters receive.

The remainder of this document discusses how these laws apply to common aspects of the election process.

MAKING VOTER REGISTRATION ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

The first step in the voting process is registration. The NVRA requires all offices that provide public assistance or state-funded programs that primarily serve persons with disabilities to provide the opportunity to register to vote by providing voter registration forms, assisting voters in completing the forms, and transmitting completed forms to the appropriate election official. The NVRA requires such offices to provide any citizen who wishes to register to vote the same degree of assistance with voter registration forms as it provides with regard to completing the office’s own forms. The NVRA also requires that if such office provides its services to a person with a disability at the person’s home, the office shall provide these voter registration services at the home as well.

In a 2011 NVRA case, the Department reached a settlement with the State of Rhode Island that required state officials to ensure that voter registration opportunities are offered at all disability services offices in the state and to develop and implement training and tracking programs for those offices.

In addition to the registration opportunities guaranteed by the NVRA, the ADA requires states to ensure that all aspects of the voter registration process are accessible to persons with disabilities. The ADA also prohibits a state from categorically disqualifying all individuals who have intellectual or mental health disabilities from registering to vote or from voting because of their disability.

PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE POLLING PLACES

In communities large and small, people cast their ballots in a variety of facilities that temporarily serve as polling places, such as libraries, schools, and fire stations, or churches, stores, and other private buildings. The ADA requires that public entities ensure that people with disabilities can access and use their voting facilities. The ADA's regulations and the ADA Standards for Accessible Design set out what makes a facility accessible and should be used to determine the level of accessibility at any facility being considered for use as a polling place. The Justice Department's [ADA Checklist for Polling Places | PDF](#) provides guidance to election officials for determining whether a polling place already has the basic accessibility features needed by most voters with disabilities or can be made accessible using temporary solutions.

An additional Justice Department publication, [Solutions for Five Common ADA Access Problems at Polling Places | PDF](#), illustrates suggested temporary solutions for several common problems found at polling places. For example, if parking is provided at a polling place but there are no accessible parking spaces, election administrators can create temporary accessible parking by using traffic cones and portable signs to mark off the accessible spaces and access aisles.

The Department of Justice has expanded the scope of the Election Day monitoring conducted by Civil Rights Division staff to include assessments of the physical accessibility of polling places. For the 2012 general election, the Department's Election Day monitors conducted accessibility surveys of approximately 240 polling places in 28 jurisdictions throughout the country.

In some circumstances, when a public entity is unable to identify or create an accessible polling place for a particular voting precinct or ward, election administrators may instead use an alternative method of voting at the polling place. While absentee balloting can be offered to voters with disabilities, it cannot take the place of in-person voting for those who prefer to vote at the polls on Election Day. Any alternative method of voting must offer voters with disabilities an equally effective opportunity to cast their votes in person. For example, the only suitable polling site in a precinct might be an inaccessible building. In this rare circumstance, election administrators may provide "curbside voting" to allow persons with disabilities to vote outside the polling place or in their cars. In order to be effective, however, the curbside voting system must include: (1) signage informing voters of the possibility of voting curbside, the location of the curbside voting, and how a voter is supposed to notify the official that she is waiting curbside; (2) a location that allows the curbside voter to obtain information from candidates and others campaigning outside the polling place; (3) a method for the voter with a disability to announce her arrival at the curbside (a temporary doorbell or buzzer system would be sufficient, but not a telephone system requiring the use of a cell phone or a call ahead notification); (4) a prompt response from election officials to acknowledge their awareness of the voter; (5) timely delivery of the same information that is provided to voters inside the polling place; and (6) a portable voting system that is accessible and allows the voter to cast her ballot privately and

independently.

Curbside voting is permissible only under these limited circumstances. Under the ADA, jurisdictions must select polling sites that are or can be made accessible, so that voters with disabilities can participate in elections on the same terms and with the same level of privacy as other voters.

In February 2014, the Department of Justice and Blair County, Pennsylvania, entered into a Settlement Agreement under the ADA concerning the accessibility of the County's polling places. The County agreed that by the 2014 general election, all of its polling places would be accessible on Election Day to voters with mobility and vision impairments. The County agreed to relocate some polling places that were not accessible and to provide temporary measures at others such as portable ramps and doorbells to make sure that they are accessible on Election Day.

ENSURING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES DO NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Public entities must ensure that they do not have policies, procedures, or practices in place that interfere with or prohibit persons with certain disabilities from registering to vote or voting based on their disability. For example, an election official cannot refuse to provide an absentee ballot or voter registration form to a person with a disability because the official knows the voter resides in a nursing home.

In addition, the ADA requires public entities to modify their voting policies, practices, and procedures when such modifications are necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of a voter's disability. That requirement is relaxed only if election administrators can show that the proposed modification would fundamentally alter the nature of the voting program. For example, voters who use crutches may have difficulty waiting in a long line to vote. The ADA does not require that these voters be moved to the front of the line, but the public entity should provide a chair for them while they wait. For a voter with multiple sclerosis who may be unable to tolerate extreme temperatures, providing a chair inside the polling place may be an appropriate modification.

Similarly, election officials must modify a "no animals/pets" policy to allow voters with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animals in all areas of the polling place where the public is allowed to go. Additionally, if a jurisdiction requires voters to provide identification, the ADA requires that election officials not restrict the permissible forms of identification from voters with disabilities to ones that are not available to those voters. For example, individuals with severe vision impairments, certain developmental disabilities, or epilepsy are ineligible in many states to receive a driver's license. Thus, accepting only a driver's license would unlawfully screen out these voters.

PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE VOTING SYSTEMS AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

HAVA requires jurisdictions conducting **federal** elections to have a voting system (such as the actual voting machines) that is accessible, including to citizens who are blind or visually impaired, at each polling place. The accessible voting system must provide the same opportunity for access and participation, including privacy and independence, that other voters enjoy. States can satisfy this accessibility requirement through use of a direct recording electronic voting system or other voting system equipped for individuals with disabilities. In addition to HAVA, the ADA requires officials responsible for conducting all public elections to make sure that any accessible voting systems are maintained and function properly in each election, and that election officials have been adequately trained to operate them.

Following the enactment of HAVA, the Department monitored the nationwide implementation of the accessible voting systems requirements and successfully resolved litigation in Maine, New York, and Pennsylvania to ensure that accessible voting systems were established in every polling place in those states.

The ADA requires election officials conducting **any** elections at the federal, state, or local level to provide communication with voters with disabilities that is as effective as that provided to others. To ensure that voters with disabilities can fully participate in the election process, officials must provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services at each stage of the process, from registering to vote to casting a ballot. Only if providing an aid or service would result in a fundamental alteration or undue financial and administrative burdens is a jurisdiction not required to provide the aid or service. However, the jurisdiction still has an obligation to provide, if possible, another aid or service that results in effective communication. In determining the type of auxiliary aid and service to be provided, officials must give primary consideration to the request of the voter.

Examples of auxiliary aids and services for people who are blind or have low vision include a qualified reader (a person who is able to read effectively, accurately, and impartially using necessary specialized vocabulary); information in large print or Braille; accessible electronic information and information technology; and audio recording of printed information. Examples of auxiliary aids and services for people who are deaf or have hearing loss include sign language interpreters, Video Remote Interpreting, captioning, and written notes. For additional information about auxiliary aids and services, see ADA Requirements: Effective Communication at <http://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm>.

For example, suppose that a jurisdiction is conducting an election for mayor and city council members using a paper ballot system. A blind voter requests an accessible ballot. A Braille ballot would have to be counted separately and would be readily identifiable, and thus would not constitute a secret ballot. Other aids and services would better afford voters who are blind the opportunity to vote privately and independently and to cast a secret ballot, just like other voters. These may include ballot overlays or templates, electronic information and information technology that is accessible (either independently or through assistive technology such as screen readers), or recorded text or telephone voting systems.

The requirement to provide effective communication also extends to other information related to the voting process, such as poll workers obtaining address and registration

information from voters. Whatever information the public entity provides relating to the voting process must be accessible and usable by all who come to cast their ballots. For example, election officials should have pen and paper available and be prepared to write out questions at the polling place check-in table for a voter who is deaf and can communicate through written communications.

In 2009, the Department entered into a landmark ADA settlement agreement with the City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, that transformed the historic city into a model program of accessible polling places. A key component of the settlement was training for poll workers, election officials, and election administration staff.

TRAINING

Prior to Election Day or the beginning of early voting, election staff and volunteers receive training so they can appropriately interact with people with disabilities. Staff and volunteers should understand the specific auxiliary aids and services that are available. They should be aware that service animals must be allowed to accompany voters inside the polling place, that accessibility features at the polling place need to be operational, that people with disabilities are allowed assistance from a person of their choice, and that other modifications may be needed to accommodate voters with disabilities. Many local disability organizations, including Centers for Independent Living and Protection and Advocacy Systems, conduct ADA and disability trainings in their communities. The Department of Justice and the National Network of ADA Centers can provide local contact information for these organizations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For information about how the ADA applies to voting, please visit our website or call our toll-free number.

ADA Information Line

800-514-0301 (Voice) and 800-514-0383 (TTY)

24 hours a day to order publications by mail.

Monday-Wednesday, Friday 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Thursday 12:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. (Eastern Time) to speak with an ADA Specialist. Calls are confidential.

ADA Website

www.ADA.gov

To receive e-mail notifications when new ADA information is available, visit the ADA Website's home page and click the link under ADA.gov Updates in the lower right corner of the page.

For information about the VRA, VAEHA, NVRA, and HAVA, please visit the Voting Section's website: www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/

To report complaints of possible violations of the federal voting rights laws, you may contact the Voting Section: www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/misc/contact.php.

You can contact the Voting Section through our toll free number (800-253-3931) or our email address (voting.section@usdoj.gov).

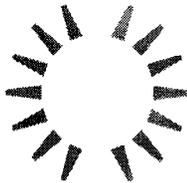
For persons with disabilities, this publication is available in large print, Braille, audio tape, and on computer disk.

Reproduction of this publication is encouraged.

September 2014

The Americans with Disabilities Act authorizes the Department of Justice (the Department) to provide technical assistance to individuals and entities that have rights or responsibilities under the Act. This document provides informal guidance to assist you in understanding the ADA and the Department's regulations.

This guidance document is not intended to be a final agency action, has no legally binding effect, and may be rescinded or modified in the Department's complete discretion, in accordance with applicable laws. The Department's guidance documents, including this guidance, do not establish legally enforceable responsibilities beyond what is required by the terms of the applicable statutes, regulations, or binding judicial precedent.



**Wisconsin Council of the
Blind & Visually Impaired**

754 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703
608-255-1166
www.wcblind.org
info@wcblind.org

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

Dear Committee on Campaigns and Elections,

On behalf of the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired, I am writing in support of 2019 Assembly Bill 168, which amends state statute regarding the requirement of a voter to state their name and address prior to voting. Passage of this statute revision removes a barrier to voting for people with speech-related disabilities.

As a voter who is legally blind, I am thankful for the accommodations that have removed many barriers to voting. Simple things like being able to place an "X" in the poll book in place of my signature, getting assistance with my ballot when needed and using accessible voting machines have all made me feel welcome in my polling place. These accommodations empower me to fully participate in my civic duty to vote. Because these provisions are in place, I have no fear that I will be denied the right to vote just because I cannot vote in the same physical manner as my sighted peers.

My desire is for all people with disabilities to have this same empowering experience when they show up to vote. In some instances, voters with speech-related disabilities have been questioned about their inability to speak. They have felt uncomfortable and hesitant to come back to their polling place in the future, out of concern, embarrassing or fear that they will not be given a ballot.

The bill's request to allow the voter to show identification and then have a person of their choosing state their name and address, is simple to implement, allows for voter lines to move smoothly and has no added cost for the municipality.

I urge the committee to pass AB 168 onto the full Assembly for consideration and ask for your colleagues' support of the bill's passage.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Denise Jess, CEO/Executive Director



Greater Wisconsin
Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.

**Written Testimony of
Janet L. Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator
Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.**

**For the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections
April 22, 2019**

Re: Support for AB 168 relating to the requirement for stating name and address prior to voting

Chair Tusler, Vice-Chair Sanfelippo, and members of the Campaign and Elections Committee,

The Greater WI Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. delivers innovative support, training, technical assistance and oversight to lead aging agencies in 70 counties (all except Dane and Milwaukee) and 11 tribes. We work together to promote, protect, and enhance the well-being of older people in Wisconsin.

We believe AB 168 enhances the well-being of older people with disabilities by assisting those who due to their disability are unable to state their name and address prior to voting, as required under current law, to meet the requirements through alternative means. This legislation would allow adults with disabilities of any age to meet the requirement by presenting their valid voter identifications to an election official for confirmation and then either the election official, or another person selected by the voter, would then state the voter's name and address.

The older adult population accounts for a large portion of voters during elections. Yet, we know not all people have equal opportunities to engage in this civic action. Health, social, and economic status can present barriers to voting for some citizens. An older adult who has had a stroke might have difficulty speaking, yet still be able to and want to vote. There are a variety of disabilities and medical conditions that can affect speech. AB 168 helps to address barriers faced by those whose disability has affected their ability to speak by creating an alternative process for them to meet the "state your name and address" requirement to vote.

One in five people eligible to vote has a disability. The voter registration and voting process must be accessible to all voters. We ask for your support of AB 168 so older adults (including those residing in long-term care residential settings) and adults of any age with a disability affecting their ability to meet this voting requirement can continue to exercise this most important civic responsibility.

We look forward to working with you to shape public policy that improves the quality of life of older people throughout the state.

Contact: Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator
Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources
janet.zander@gwaar.org
(715) 677-6723 or (608) 228-7253 (cell)

Hello, my name is Denise Johnson and I am the Wisconsin Statewide Project Coordinator Substance Use/Mental Health Services for Individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind at IndependenceFirst in Milwaukee for over 16 years. I am also Deaf. I am here to share my voting experience and the amended Assembly Bill 168.

I do have some concerns that I would like to share. I have been voting since 2006, I have not had any issues related to my voting experience until last year when the polling sites' volunteers forced me to speak my name and address. But why enforced it now?

I somewhat support this amended bill but I want to share my experiences. All these years, I have simply shown my current driver license, signed the book, and this was never a problem for anyone. So why now force people to speak their names and address. I know that polling sites' volunteers have not practiced this law in years. I believe that our current law had been written back in 1940 is very old where things have changed over the years. We have other ways to show proof through documents such as driver license, ID and other means of technology to support to show proof other than forcing people to speak their name and address. I believe this simple solution will be a bit easier for everyone involved by providing a driver license or an ID and another proof of identity with a picture along with a person's driver license or an ID.

I preferred to do what I have been doing for all these years is simply provide my driver license and sign my name in the voter's book as proof. I do not want the volunteer to state my name and address, where it puts me in a vulnerable situation where someone will know my name and address may take advantage of me as a Deaf person. In addition, this is not equal access for all, everyone will have the privilege to hear everyone's name address while a deaf person or a person who cannot hear well will not have the privilege to hear other people state their name and address.

I would like to share an experience I just learned from a colleague of mine. An elderly person with hearing loss that wore a hearing aid went to vote. People that wear a hearing aid tend to speak loud so that the person can

hear his/her own voice. The volunteer that assisted with voting registration, shouted back to the elderly person restating their name and address. There were youth present who could clearly hear the address, who texted others this information. As a result, the elderly person's home was robbed!

I am also one of the Deaf Unity founders who support individuals who are deaf/hard of hearing/deaf-blind who experience domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Individuals who experience DV/SA should not be forced to go to the clerk to get approval that she/he experience DV/SA to attend a site to vote to show proof that the volunteer does not have to speak out loud.

You may ask why not vote through the absentee voting. Absentee voter instructions are difficult to understand especially since English is my second language and American Sign Language is my naive language. I prefer to go to the site like everyone else and vote.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to me today and I hope you will take this input and my personal story into consideration when you amend Assembly Bill 168.

People First Wisconsin



See Our d&A Ability

April 17, 2019

Dear Joint Finance Committee:

People First Wisconsin supports the new bill - AB168. People First is a group made up of people with disabilities. We are all strong advocates for our rights, in the classroom, in the community, and work, and especially for our civil rights. Not all our members speak using their voice like you and me. This shouldn't mean that they can't vote. We all have the right to vote as a citizen of this great country. Poll workers should not turn down people with disabilities who do not speak based on the current laws.

We support that this bill would allow a voter with a disability to present their identification to the election official, who can confirm that the identification meets the law's requirements. The election official or someone selected by the voter, must then state the voter's name and address. This is a very reasonable accommodation that will allow voters with disabilities to vote without feeling discriminated against.

As a member of the Disability Vote Coalition and the Executive Director of People First Wisconsin, I am willing to discuss this issue at further length down the road. I have included my phone number and email address at the bottom of this letter.

Sincerely,

Cindy Bentley

Executive Director, People First Wisconsin

(414) 483-2546

peoplefirstwi@gmail.com

www.peoplefirstwisconsin.org



April 23, 2019

Dear Members of the Committee on Campaign and Elections,

My name is Lauren Grudzinski and I am an individual that lives with a disability. I am also an employee of Independence**First**, an Independent Living Center in Milwaukee. I am calling on you to pass Assembly Bill 168.

As you know current Wisconsin law requires all voters to say aloud their name and address to receive a ballot. Assembly Bill 168 would require accommodations for voters who are unable to speak their name and address because of disability.

I have co-workers and consumers that are unable to speak verbally. The current law has prevented many from executing their voting rights. Please pass Assembly Bill 168 so that people with disabilities are no longer denied the right to vote.

Sincerely,

Lauren Grudzinski
Work Incentive Benefit Specialist
Independence**First**
540 S 1st Street
Milwaukee, WI 53204
Direct 414-226-8197 • **Fax** 414-291-7525
lgrudzinski@independencefirst.org



April 18, 2019

Dear Assembly Committee on Campaign and Elections,

IndependenceFirst is one of the eight independent living centers in the state of Wisconsin. We all provide 5-core services, Advocacy-Individual and Systems, Information and Referral, Independent Living Skills, Transition, and Peer Support. Additionally, IndependenceFirst provides 15 other programs and services for people with disabilities to live independently in their communities.

IndependenceFirst works very hard to promote voting rights for individuals with disabilities by assisting in registering to vote, training on issues, providing voter forums, and ensuring that polling places are accessible. Current Wisconsin law requiring individuals to state their name and address prior to voting is a barrier to individuals with disabilities and consequently, violates their civil right to vote. Due to a disability, many voters are unable to speak aloud their name and address, and therefore, we endorse and are in full support of Assembly Bill 168.

Assembly Bill 168 would require accommodation for voters who are unable to speak their name and address because of disability. The bill permits individuals who cannot state their name and address to have an election official, or other person selected by the voter to state their name and address for them. Under current Wisconsin law, there is not a requirement to provide such an accommodation; Assembly Bill 168 would remedy this critically overlooked situation.

Voting is one of our nation's most fundamental rights and a hallmark of our democracy. Important federal civil rights laws were enacted to combat discrimination and protect the fundamental right to vote for all Americans, specifically individuals with disabilities. These laws include the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984, the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, and the Help America Vote Act of 2002.

I encourage you to pass Assembly Bill 168 and echo federal laws to help ensure the fairness in the voting process for individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Deb Langham
Chief Operating Officer
414-226-8371
dlangham@independencefirst.org



IndependenceFirst 540 South 1st Street Milwaukee, WI 53204-1605
414-291-7520 V/Relay Fax: 414-291-7525 www.independencefirst.org

April 16, 2018

Good afternoon,

I understand that there is a hearing scheduled next week for AB168, relating to the requirement for stating name and address prior to voting. I am not able to attend, but would like to submit written testimony in support of the bill on behalf of my agency, Heart Consulting LLC.

I have worked individuals with developmental and physical disabilities for over ten years, and started an agency to reduce gendered violence against people with disabilities. I am also a part of the Disability Vote Coalition because I believe that every voice needs to be heard, and that there are too many barriers that keep citizens with disabilities from being able to vote and exercise their other rights as well.

Concerns were raised to Disability Rights Wisconsin from some voters with disabilities and family members about the troubling and discriminatory impact of current Wisconsin law requiring voters to say their name and address before receiving a ballot. Some voters cannot state their name and address due to disability or medical condition; Wisconsin law does not currently require a disability related accommodation for these voters.

There are many people with disabilities that affect their ability to speak. They often are able to use adaptations and modifications to be able to communicate in other ways. However, at the polls, they are required to verbally state their name and address. Not being able to verbally speak does not imply that a person is not able to exercise their rights, research candidates they believe have their best interests in mind, and vote.

AB168 would allow a voter with a disability to present his or her identification to the election official, who verifies that the identification conforms to the current law requirements. The election official, or another person selected by the voter, must then state the voter's name and address. This is a very reasonable accommodation that will allow voters with disabilities. I ask that legislators vote in favor of this bill so that citizens with disabilities are able to exercise their rights and be heard at the polls.

Thank you,

Ellen Merker, LPC-IT
Pronouns: She, Her, Hers
Founding Director
HEART Consulting, LLC

608-513-2139 (Cell)

ellenm@heartconsulting.org

<https://www.heartconsultingllc.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/heartconsultingllc/>

Dear Senators and Representatives,

Thank you for hosting this hearing today and allowing me the opportunity to testify, and thank you to the sponsors and co-sponsors of this bill. I am speaking today as a citizen and not as part of any organization. I am speaking today in support of Assembly Bill 168, otherwise known as LRB 2487 and 2648. For those of you who know me, my name is Ramsey Lee and I believe everyone who is able to vote should be able to fully participate in the voting process. These bills will help reduce barriers and allow people to fully participate in the great voting experience. I have several friends who are non-verbal who this will greatly help. I have been informed that currently under Wisconsin law statute 6.79(2)(a), requires voters to state their name and address before receiving a ballot to vote. This can be a challenge for voters who are non-verbal or who are hard to understand. I have Cerebral Palsy myself, and sometimes it is hard for people to understand me. I am doing this not for myself, I am doing this so Wisconsin voters with disabilities can fully participate in the voting process. According to the Wisconsin Vote Coalition, Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition, and Disability Rights Wisconsin, they received several contacts regarding concerns about individuals with developmental disabilities who could not state their name and address. In my opinion, this bill would remove some of these barriers and is absolutely essential for all citizens. The Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition is a non partisan effort designed to increase voter turnout among people with disabilities, and I do not represent any of the groups stated above. I am bringing this up as a citizen and I wanted to pass the information on. These bills are a tremendous step in the right direction, and I thank you for having this hearing, so that all citizens who are able can more fully participate in the voting process. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Ramsey Lee
Hudson, Wisconsin

Ramsey A. Lee

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN

612 W. Main Street, #200
Madison, WI 53703

Phone: (608) 256-0827
www.lwwwi.org



April 23, 2019

To: Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

Re: Support for AB 168

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin believes that state election laws should provide citizens with maximum opportunity for registration, voting at the polls, and absentee voting. To that end we support AB 168 which would alleviate a barrier for some qualified citizens.

Current law requires voters to state their name and address at a polling place, which creates a barrier for eligible voters with disabilities that make it difficult or impossible to comply. Currently, there are provisions in state law that allow for voters with disabilities to receive assistance in the process of voting, including curbside voting. Yet current law does not address the requirement to verbally state one's name in the polling place.

AB 168 allows voters who are unable to state their name and address due to a disability to present their ID to the election official to be verified. Then either the election official or a person helping the voter may state the voter's name out loud for the benefit of observers. This sensible legislation allows voters with certain disabilities to exercise their right to vote, while preserving transparency by allowing observers to hear the voter's name and address.

We support AB 168 and urge you to do so as well.



Election Commission

Commissioners
Stephanie Findley, Chair
Carmen C. Cabrera
Robert F. Spindell, Jr.

Executive Director
Neil V. Albrecht

April 22, 2019

TO: Representative Ron Tusler
Chair, Committee on Campaigns and Elections

FROM: Neil Albrecht
Executive Director, City of Milwaukee Election Commission

The City of Milwaukee Election Commission supports **Assembly Bill 168**, relating to the requirement for stating name and address prior to voting and **Assembly Bill 64**, relating to aids to counties and municipalities for certain special election costs and making an appropriation.

We believe that Assembly Bill 168 provides an important accommodation in the voting process for persons with disabilities, and the appropriation consideration of Assembly Bill 64 is fair and consistent with the state's formula for allocating election costs.

