



STATE SENATOR
Eric Wimberger
DISTRICT 30

May 5th, 2021

Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics

Testimony in favor of Senate Bill 292

Dear Chair Bernier and committee members,

Thank you for holding today's hearing. Senate Bill 292 is a simple piece of legislation that will help modernize our public records laws and our vote counting process, all while increasing transparency and public confidence in our elections.

An increasing number of municipalities have, in recent years, chosen to broadcast their vote count and canvass proceedings live over the internet, including Milwaukee, Green Bay, Madison, and others. These broadcasts are an optional public service that allow for citizens to see a portion of our democracy that they might otherwise miss.

On rare occurrences when there are questions as to the conduct of election officials or with the tampering of ballots, any and all records will be important to answering these questions. That is why Senate Bill 292 requires any municipality that broadcasts its canvassing procedures to record that broadcast and treat it as a public record, preserving it for 22 months. Partial broadcasts of Dane County's 2020 presidential election recount are available online; however, if a municipality is going to choose to broadcast such an event, the recording should be preserved in its entirety as a public record.

This bill is about transparency and public confidence in elections. Nothing more, nothing less.

Thank you for your time this morning. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



SHAE SORTWELL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 2nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Hearing Testimony
Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform, and Ethics
May 5, 2021
Senate Bill 292

Chair-woman Bernier and members of the Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform, and Ethics – thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on SB 292, relating to broadcasting election night proceedings.

We can all agree that having free and fair elections is integral to the freedom of our republic. To better achieve that end, there is room for reform of our elections laws, including this simple, common-sense, and bipartisan piece of legislation.

When investigating the corruption that occurred in Green Bay for the November 2020 election, I found that the City live-streamed the central count location on election night. However, I was puzzled that they did not keep a recording of the video. It is up for debate what reasoning they had for that decision, but common-sense says that they should have kept it for transparency.

Nonetheless, under current law, it is not required by a municipality to keep a video record of canvassing proceedings in any election that is live-streamed. To ensure and maintain election integrity and accountability, this bill will require that broadcast to be kept as a record and retained for 22 months.

As a note, if a municipality live-streams on a third-party site, such as Youtube, they are allowed to archive the record on the third-party site as a way to retain it.

I want to thank the committee for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions members of the committee may have.