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# SHAE SORTWELL

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 2<sup>nd</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Hearing Testimony**  
**Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections**  
**August 30, 2023**  
**Assembly Bills 330 and 335**

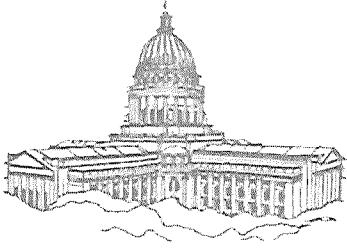
Chairman Krug and members of the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections – thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on two pieces of legislation that are part of Rep. Ortiz-Velez and I’s election reform package - ABs 330 and 335.

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 election laws, including these simple, bipartisan pieces of legislation.

AB 330 was created in response to a situation where a 2023 school board candidate was removed from the ballot because 400 valid signatures were not found within the first 800 provided, and the additional supplemental signatures were not counted. Those involved in this debacle cited that state law and administrative code are gray on the issue. To clear things up, we introduced this bill to provide the clarification needed for local clerks on how to count the signatures required for ballot placement.

AB 335 serves two primary goals: to maintain accountability and avoid any future misuse of campaign funds by public office candidates and to redistribute donations back to individuals. Once someone is adjudicated guilty of certain campaign finance laws, this bill would require the court to order the person’s campaign account be dissolved and to appoint a new treasurer who will only be allowed to return the campaign funds to donors or donate the funds to the common school fund in accordance with the dissolution order.

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



**LENA C. TAYLOR**

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

**Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections  
AB 330 Testimony of Senator Lena C. Taylor  
8/30/2023**

Chairman Krug, Vice Chairman Maxey and members of the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Assembly Bill 330, relating to the number of signatures on nomination papers.

There is nothing easy about signature collection for a state or local office. In particular, many candidates are new to the process and don't fully understand either district boundaries, or how information can be discounted on their nomination signature forms.

With due diligence, candidates work hard to ensure that the information they collect to secure a place on a ballot is accurate. However, when collecting 2000 – 4000 signatures, for example, we often enlist the help of others. In some cases, you collect more than the needed 4000 signatures. Because of the way the law is currently structured, those signatures above the maximum are discounted.

You review what you have, do an internal count, and feel pretty good that you have met the minimum threshold. However, the Election Commission or municipal clerk, may question, strike or discount signatures for a number of reasons. We had multiple such scenarios play out in the last couple of years in involving Milwaukee candidates.

Candidates for Milwaukee School Board Shandowlyon Hendricks and Aisha Carr come to mind. Ms. Hendricks fell short in the initial 400 signatures needed to gain ballot access, but had collected additional signatures, that were turned in with her maximum amount needed, that could have been counted.

If they were allowed to pull from the signatures, which were collected above the 400, candidates could still make the ballot. We should not be in the business of making it harder for candidates to get on the ballot. If they are able to secure additional signatures above the maximum required and submit them along with their signatures at the deadline, they should be accepted.

If they meet the threshold for a sufficient number of signatures, with the initial number they have submitted, that fall below the maximum, then the additional signatures are not reviewed. But if they fall short, they should be able to access the signatures above the maximum number they turned in. The public interest is not harmed, but served, when we make the pathway to public service easier. I, therefore, ask for your support for AB 330 and thank you for your consideration.



August 30, 2023

**Testimony on 2023 Assembly Bill 330**

***Relating to: the number of signatures on nomination papers***

Thank you, Chairman Krug and other members of the committee, for hearing my testimony on AB330 today. I also want to thank my colleague Rep. Ortiz-Velez for being my partner on this bipartisan bill idea.

A situation occurred where a candidate for school board submitted 941 signatures for nomination, more than the maximum requirement of 800 signatures. The WI Elections Commission did not find 400 valid signatures in the first 800 provided, and the candidate was initially disqualified. Eventually, after the individual appealed, the Elections Commission was able to find the remaining signatures needed from the 141 extra signatures.

This bill is a simple clarification for our local clerks on how to count signatures required for ballot placement. When a candidate goes to the hard work to collect signatures from their community, those signatures should be able to be counted to ensure the candidate has a fair shot.

Thank you for your consideration of this common-sense clarification.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jesse James'.

Senator Jesse James

23<sup>rd</sup> Senate District