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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.



To: Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections  
From: Senator Mark Spreitzer  
Re: Testimony on Assembly Bill 335  
Date: August 30, 2023

Chair Krug and committee members,

Thank you for hearing Assembly Bill 335, an important bill that will address shortcomings in current law around candidates who have been found guilty of violating campaign finance laws. Under current law, people who are convicted of a felony for campaign finance violations - and have therefore lost their ability to run for public office in Wisconsin - are still able to direct the use of funds in their campaign committee account without restriction. Especially in situations where the person has been found guilty of misusing campaign funds, this is a very concerning oversight that can be corrected through the passage of AB 335.

This is not a theoretical issue. There have been recent examples of people found guilty of misusing campaign funds who maintained control of those funds. To avoid any future misuse of campaign funds, AB 335 requires the court to order that campaign accounts of those found guilty under campaign finance law must be dissolved and a new treasurer must be appointed, who will only be allowed to return funds to donors or donate the funds to the common school fund in accordance with the court's dissolution order. As each case will be unique, this bill aims to empower our legal system to respond appropriately while removing the ability of the former candidate to be involved in the allocation of campaign funds.

I am grateful for the collaborative bipartisan process that produced AB 335, and I thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this important legislation. I look forward to answering your questions and earning your support for AB 335.

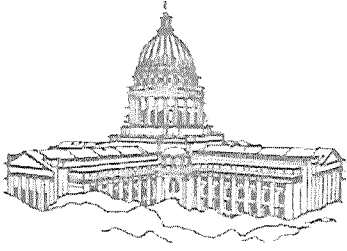
Sincerely,

Mark Spreitzer  
State Senator  
15th Senate District

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**15th SENATE DISTRICT**

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# LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

**Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections  
AB 335 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 judgments concerning a candidate's felony violation of certain campaign finance or election fraud laws.

It goes without saying that the majority of people who run for office, do it for all the right reasons. While we may disagree on ideology, the role of government, or policy prescriptives, most of ran to provide a voice and representation for the residents of our districts.

However, we must also be willing to acknowledge that sometimes elected officials fall short. Legislators, public employees, and other public servants often face consequences when they are convicted of a felony. Those penalties can include removal from office, permanent disqualification from holding office, restitution, fines and/or a lengthy prison sentences.

In November 1996, the electors of the State of Wisconsin ratified a constitutional amendment which bars any person, who has been convicted of a felony for which they have not been pardoned, or who has been convicted of a misdemeanor involving a violation of public trust for which they have not been pardoned, from holding a state or local office.

Any person convicted of a felony in any federal or state court in the United States is barred from running for state or local office in Wisconsin, unless that person has been pardoned. This situation, therefore, begs the question: why would that individual be allowed to maintain a campaign account.

Monies that were intended to support campaigns and candidates were provided in good faith. It is appropriate that if a candidate is found guilty of a felony, in a criminal proceeding, the candidate's committee should be dissolved and the remaining funds returned. There are safeguards put in place to ensure the proper use of public dollars, even in campaigns. AB 335 is one such protection and I encourage your support of this bill. Thank you.



WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

**DAN KNODL**

STATE SENATOR • 8<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

## Assembly Bill 335

Public Testimony

Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

August 30, 2023

Assembly Bill 335 requires the closure of the campaign finance account of a candidate adjudicated guilty of campaign finance or election fraud laws.

This common sense bill will help uphold the rule of law and the principles of transparency and accountability. Campaign finance and election fraud violations currently disqualify the candidate to run for future office, but their campaign account may continue to remain active.

Under Senate Bill 334, not only will a candidate's campaign committee be terminated, but the committee will be required to either return its remaining funds to its donors or donate them to the common school fund. The adjudicating court will also be required to appoint a treasurer to carry out the committee's dissolution.

In just the past year, an alderwoman in the city of Milwaukee was removed from office after pleading guilty to misconduct in public office, misconduct which included using campaign funds to pay for family trips and personal expenses. This individual is no longer eligible to run for public office—it makes sense that our laws also address the closure of the related campaign account.

Good campaign finance laws ensure the integrity of elections and the democratic process. They also help preserve public trust in the fairness of elections. This bill accomplishes all of these goals by guaranteeing that the campaign accounts of bad actors cannot be further misused. I am glad this bill has bipartisan support in both the State Senate and in the Assembly.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.