



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

December 6, 2023

Testimony on Senate Bill 522

Thank you Chairman Feyen and Committee members for today's hearing on Senate Bill 522, which specifies that Technical College Board Members must be United States Citizens. This bill comes to me from a technical college board member who is himself an immigrant who became a United States Citizen.

Tech College Boards perform an important service for the districts which they serve. They work with employers, educators, and students to ensure their Technical College is providing the classes, training, and opportunities that are necessary for the success of their district. They also have the authority to levy property taxes just as K-12 school district boards and municipal governing bodies do.

However, there is one significant difference between technical college district boards and other school district boards, and municipal governing bodies. That is that members of those boards are comprised of elected officials. And, Wisconsin law requires all elected officials to be U.S. citizens. There is no such requirement for technical college district board members

This bill creates a standard requirement for all public officials that are able to levy taxes and borrow money on behalf of the public. I believe it only makes sense that these powerful quasi-governmental boards are held to the same standards as every other local official in Wisconsin. I encourage you to support its passage.

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AMANDA NEDWESKI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 61ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

December 6, 2023

Senate Committee on Economic Development and Technical Colleges
Testimony on Senate Bill 522

Senator Feyen and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding public hearing on Senate Bill 522. Members of a technical college board in Wisconsin are empowered by statute to levy a tax on the full value of the taxable property of the district for the purposes of making capital improvements, acquiring equipment, operating and maintaining the schools of the district, and paying principal and interest on valid bonds or notes. A technical college district board may borrow money and levy taxes to be used for the purchase or construction of buildings and for additions, enlargements and improvements to buildings, and for the acquisition of sites and equipment.

Except for the district board governing the Milwaukee Area Technical College, Wisconsin technical college boards shall be composed of 9 members who are residents of the district, including two employers, two employees, three additional members, one school district administrator, and one elected official who holds a state or local office.

Technical college boards are responsible for the organization, operation, and planning aspects of the institution. Their authority to levy a property tax and borrow money for these purposes is powerful. Elected representatives of municipal, school board, and state governing bodies for Wisconsin must be U.S. citizens. These are our primary tax levying bodies. Due to their levying and borrowing authority, this legislation simply requires Wisconsin technical College Board members to be United States citizens, as well.

SB 522 provides an exception for any currently serving Wisconsin technical College Board members who may not be U.S. citizens. If a non-citizen is currently serving on a technical college board currently, that member may serve out the remainder of their current term.

In the Assembly committee, a concern was raised that this bill targets one individual. While there may only be one person serving on a Wisconsin technical college district board who is not currently a U.S. citizen, I would say that people paying property taxes on the 64,000 parcels in Kenosha County may beg to differ. It affects all of them. If I went to my district and asked every property tax payer if they agree that a non-citizen should be levying a tax on them, I believe the resounding answer would be no.

When the statutes surrounding technical college district boards were drafted over 100 years ago, I believe the authors simply mistakenly neglected to include a U.S. citizenship requirement, perhaps as an unintentional oversight. While there are certainly many, many non-citizen members of our communities who are valuable contributors, hard-workers, honorable people, and exemplary neighbors, we have a responsibility to ensure going forward that taxes in Wisconsin are levied by U.S. citizens.