



WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

DAN KNODL

STATE SENATOR • 8TH DISTRICT

Senate Bill 822

Public Testimony

Senate Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections, and Consumer Protection

January 25, 2024

Thank you, members of the committee, for being here to hear my testimony on Senate Bill 822.

Unlike state candidate committees, who are required to register and file campaign finance reports to the Ethics Commission through the CFIS system, candidates for local office register and file their reports with their local clerks. This bill will shift the burden of administering campaign finance at the local level from the local clerks to the CFIS system.

The amount of time our clerks have had to devote to elections-related duties has increased significantly over the past two decades, and I believe that taking this particular time-consuming responsibility off our clerks' plates is a sensible way to help us recruit and retain good clerks.

Furthermore, having all of our state's candidates reporting through CFIS will mean that campaign finance reports for all candidates will be accessible in one place. This will facilitate greater public engagement at all levels of government, and that is something I believe we can all support.

The time to implement this change is now. The CFIS website is undergoing a significant overhaul, which makes this an opportune moment to implement this new feature. Ethics Administrator Dan Carleton is here today and will be able to speak to the Commission's plan for executing this change.

This bill is the result of many months of discussions with all affected parties, and I would like to thank Representative Gundrum for his efforts to refine this bill to everyone's satisfaction. Thank you for your consideration of this bill, and we would be happy to answer any of your questions.



RICK GUNDRUM

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 58TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony on Senate Bill 822

Senate Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections and Consumer Protection |
January 25, 2024 | Room 300 Southeast

I want to thank Chair Knodl for working with me on this legislation and giving it a public hearing. I also thank the committee members for being here today and listening to testimony. I've spent nearly two decades in local government as a Slinger Village Trustee, Washington County Board Supervisor, and Chairman of the Washington County Board. I've run in many local races and have submitted many local finance reports. My thoughts about doing this bill come from that local government experience.

There are a few reasons I was motivated to do this bill. Firstly, I think it would be helpful to bring everyone under one umbrella for candidates. Local government candidates will just need to submit their reports through CFIS and the Ethics Commission rather than their local clerk. Secondly, I believe this bill will take a great deal of work off of local clerks, whether they be municipal clerks, county clerks, or school board clerks. Currently local clerks are required to develop and maintain their own system for these reports. My goal is to ensure they would no longer have to with this bill. Thirdly, I believe that this bill gives the people of Wisconsin more accessibility when it comes to reviewing the campaign finance reports of local candidates. CFIS is available for just about everyone and we do know that it is getting an upgrade to make it more user-friendly in years ahead.

The first discussions and drafting about this bill began in March. There were many conversations with stakeholders, drafting attorneys, Leg Council, and Ethics Commission Administrator Dan Carlton for how we may get this bill right. Through that discussion, an amendment was introduced to address some of the concerns. Senate Amendment 1 to Senate Bill 822 does the following:

- A candidate for school board shall file a registration statement with the commission and a copy of that registration statement with the school district clerk. That was to address some concerns from the Wisconsin Association of School Boards.
- Language to ensure that no candidate may appear on a ballot for any elective office unless a candidate files a registration statement for each election at which they are running. This is being done to ensure that registration statements are kept up to date.

- We moved the date this bill goes into effect to July 1, 2025 from July 1, 2024. This is being done to give everyone more time to prepare for this change.
- Since we are moving the date, we have removed the fiscal elements from the bill. This will help the Ethics Commission prepare their budget proposal more effectively ahead of the next biennial budget. The fiscal changes that would apply to this bill, such as more staff and more office space, can be taken up during the budget process at that time.

I want thank all the stakeholders and co-sponsors of this bill. I am happy that it has bipartisan support and I think this will be a great change to local elections for all parties involved. I am now happy to take questions at this time.