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*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Campaign and Elections
Representative Jim Piwowarczyk
June 3rd, 2025*

Thank you, Chairman Maxey and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify today in support of **Assembly Bill 223**.

This bill addresses a growing concern shared by many Wisconsinites: the integrity of our election process—particularly the nomination and recall petition system. Assembly Bill 223 aims to ensure that only those who are eligible to vote in Wisconsin may circulate nomination and recall petitions. This is a simple, common-sense reform that will help preserve the integrity of our democratic processes.

During a recent recall attempt, we saw clear evidence of the vulnerabilities in our current system. Roughly two-thirds of the individuals who circulated recall petitions were from out of state. These petitioners were not invested members of our communities. They were brought in from as far as Washington D.C., Arkansas, Florida, California, and Illinois. This was not a grassroots movement driven by Wisconsin voters. It was an orchestrated effort by outside activists to influence our state's electoral outcomes.

Even more concerning, at least one of these out-of-state petitioners had a criminal record and was found to have collected allegedly forged signatures. Others were connected to duplicate and questionable signatures. These activities undermine public trust in our elections and threaten the validity of the entire petition process.

Under current law, nomination and recall petitions can be circulated by anyone eligible to vote in Wisconsin *or* any U.S. citizen aged 18 or older who, if they were a resident, would not be disqualified from voting. This loophole allows individuals with no ties to our state to participate in a process that should be driven by the people of Wisconsin.

Assembly Bill 223 closes this loophole. It requires that **only those eligible to vote in Wisconsin**—that is, U.S. citizens aged 18 or older who have resided in an election district in Wisconsin for at least 28 consecutive days—may circulate nomination or recall petitions. This bill has an exception for federal candidates.

This legislation is not about making it harder to participate in democracy. It's about ensuring that the voices that shape Wisconsin's elections are those who live, work, and vote here. Out-of-state interference in our petition process erodes the legitimacy of our elections and diminishes the role of local civic engagement.

Assembly Bill 223 is a necessary step to protect the integrity of Wisconsin's electoral process and ensure that the nomination and recall systems are driven by Wisconsinites—not outside interests.

I ask for your support of this legislation. Thank you, and I'm happy to take any questions.



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

TESTIMONY ON ASSEMBLY BILL 223

Thank you, Chairman Maxey and committee members for today's hearing on Assembly 223, which, broadly speaking, keeps Wisconsin elections Wisconsin-driven.

We've all seen how local Wisconsin elections have been nationalized in recent years. Whether it is constitutionally protected money pouring in from out-of-state, or volunteers coming in all 50 states to work our elections, Wisconsin elections have become national events.

Over the last several years, my district, along with others, have been flooded by paid out-of-state activists seeking to force a recall election. The flood of money, which is constitutionally protected, led to harassment. Multiple door bells rings per day, confrontations in parking lots and businesses, threats of violence and harassment and more. Many police investigations and prosecutions came as a result. The recall attempt contributed to and drove a lot division in our communities. I want to be clear, the multiple recall attempts in my district may have begun locally, but a lot of people came from out of state to help drive the effort.

This bill ensures that at least one part of our elections stay Wisconsin-driven. Under the bill, a person obtaining signatures to qualify someone for an election (i.e., nomination papers), or to force a recall election, must be an eligible Wisconsin voter. That's it. This law would apply to all persons elected to represent Wisconsin in an election. Nomination papers placing the president and vice president on the ballot are excluded as they are true national elections.

Passing this bill will make help end the nationalization of Wisconsin elections, making Wisconsin elections once again, about Wisconsin.

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Good morning, my name is Richard Strohm, I am a resident of Wisconsin residing at 1995 Knob Road in the Town of Lyons Wisconsin and a lifelong resident of the Burlington School District. I am submitting written testimony in support of 2025 Wisconsin Assembly Bill 223 because I am not able to attend in person.

I STRONGLY urge you to pass AB 223 requiring anyone circulating nomination papers and/or recall papers to be eligible to vote in the state of Wisconsin.

In January 2024 an effort to recall Wisconsin Assembly Representative Robin Vos was launched in my area of Burlington Wisconsin. I applaud an active group of Wisconsin citizens for being engaged and taking part in the election process via an attempted recall. This is where my admiration for that group ends. Under current law this group was able to raise money for paid recall petition circulators from out-of-state in an attempt to reach the required minimum number of signatures. Locally and obviously nationally, social media ran advertisements seeking to pay up to \$25 / hour, bonuses of \$500 for 250 signatures, \$1000 for 500 signatures, and paid hotel rooms for anyone needing them from out of the area. We had people West Virginia, South Carolina, New York, Tennessee, Florida and more states gathering recall signatures. For weeks my city of Burlington and the surrounding area were subjected to aggressive people who knew nothing about the Wisconsin election landscape or issues other than they were incentivized to get a signature no matter the tactic. Many people were chased down in parking lots and police were called on at least two occasions. When the out-of-state signature gatherers were asked why Representative Vos was being recalled – they had no clear answer. Signatures were forged many times and an out-of-state felon was among those who submitted signatures. These actions disenfranchise the legitimate eligible Wisconsin voter by a group that would be gone back to their home states in weeks and unaffected by their actions.

Under current law as witnessed in the Vos Recall, all it takes is for a small group or even one individual to file a recall petition with the backing of a wealthy donor and hire out-of-state people to do what should be the work of concerned eligible Wisconsin voters and that is face the citizens of the affected communities and make the case for the recall and gather the required number of signatures.

This should not be a partisan issue but an issue that both Democrats AND Republicans can agree is the best way to represent their constituents – the Wisconsin voter.

I urge you to vote to pass AB 223.

Thank you!

Richard Strohm

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