



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 159

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and committee members for today's hearing on Senate Bill 159. This is a simple bill updating the law relating to lighting on police vehicles.

Anyone who has seen a police car recently knows that there is a variety of police vehicle lighting. Chasing lights, interment flashing lights, color changing lights, etc. However, under Wisconsin law, police vehicles must display a red light on the driver's side and a blue light on the passenger side.

This bill maintains the red light driver/blue light passenger law for lights mounted on top of or inside of a vehicle. However, Senate Bill 159 also allows for marked police vehicles to use any combination of blue and red lighting on the outside, other than the top, of the police vehicle. This change will increase the visibility of a police vehicle, enhancing safety for law enforcement.

Like I said, this is a simple bill updating the law to enhance safety and meet current technology. It is supported by the Badger State Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs and the Milwaukee Police Association among others. And I hope it has earned your support as well.

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State Capitol, P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882 • (608) 266-1832 • Toll-free (866) 615-7510
E-Mail: Sen.Wanggaard@legis.wi.gov • SenatorWanggaard.com



WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Brent Jacobson

87TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 159

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

May 7th 2025

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk and committee members, for receiving my testimony on Senate Bill 159. This legislation makes a minor adjustment to our state statutes in order keep up with changes to lighting on modern police cars.

The coloration and placement of lights on emergency vehicles is set out in state statute. If you have ever watched a police or sheriff vehicle with its lights and sirens activated, you might have noticed that the light bar on top of the vehicle is red on the driver side, and blue on the passenger side. This standard configuration is actually established within state law.

While all police vehicles in Wisconsin have this configuration for their main lights, it is not uncommon for modern police cars to have additional lights mounted as trimming along the sides or in the front or rear to improve visibility. In many cases, these configurations are made by the manufacturer. Unfortunately, this has resulted in some police vehicles being equipped with side or trimming lights that violate state statute. SB 159 updates our laws concerning police light placement to reflect how modern police vehicles may have more than just a top mounted light bar.

SB 159 clarifies that marked police vehicles equipped with a light bar, lights on the roof, or interior lights must be red on the driver side and blue on the passenger side. This bill also adds language allowing for additional blue or red lights to be mounted on the front, rear, or sides of a vehicle in any configuration. This bill does not change the requirement for a police vehicle's primary lights. It simply allows police and sheriffs departments who have acquired vehicles with trim lights that do not fall under state statute to continue to be used without expensive replacement or modifications.

Thank you once again for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask for your support of this simple bill.



To: Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
From: Badger State Sheriffs' Association
Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association
Date: May 6, 2025
RE: Support Testimony on Senate Bill 159

BSSA and WS&DSA submit in support of SB 159, which provides an important update to Wisconsin's requirements for police vehicle lighting.

As law enforcement tools and technologies continue to evolve, so too must our statutes adapt to reflect practical and modern needs in the field. Currently, Wisconsin law mandates that marked police vehicles be equipped with flashing, oscillating, or rotating red and blue lights, with specific placement—red on the driver's side and blue on the passenger side. However, this framework does not fully account for the diversity of lighting configurations used by law enforcement agencies today.

Senate Bill 159 updates this statute by offering necessary flexibility while preserving safety and clarity. Specifically, the bill ensures that for vehicles with rooftop or interior light bars, the traditional red/driver side and blue/passenger side positioning is maintained. It also allows for additional red and blue lights to be mounted on other parts of the vehicle—such as the front, sides, or rear—provided the standard roof or interior lights are in place. This flexibility supports both officer safety and vehicle visibility in a variety of operational environments.

We'd like to thank the authors, Sen. Wanggaard and Rep. B. Jacobson for authoring this legislation and the Department of Justice's Law Enforcement Services for their assistance in crafting this legislation.