



Romaine Robert Quinn

STATE SENATOR • 25TH SENATE DISTRICT

From: **Senator Romaine Robert Quinn**
To: **SENATE Committee on Transportation and Local Government**
Re: **Testimony on SENATE BILL 215**
Relating to: town clerk and treasurer appointments, publication requirements for proposed budget summary and notice of public hearing, and discontinuance of highways
Date: **Tuesday, May 6th, 2025**

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk and committee members, for your time and attention concerning Senate Bill 215, which makes common sense changes pertaining to town governments. I would also like to thank my counterpart, Representative Dallman, for his leadership on this legislation in the Assembly.

Current law allows towns with a population of 2,500 or more to move from an elected to an appointed clerk and/or treasurer by vote of the electors at a town meeting. Towns with a population under 2,500 may only move from an elected to an appointed clerk and/or treasurer by referendum. This bill would create consistency and allow all towns, regardless of population, to move to an appointed clerk and/or treasurer by vote of the electors at a town meeting.

Current law also prohibits a town's change from an elected to an appointed clerk, treasurer, or combined clerk and treasurer from taking effect until the end of the current elected term. Under the bill, a town may move to an appointed clerk, treasurer, or combined clerk and treasurer position during an elected term when there is a vacancy in the position. By empowering towns with the ability to fill vacancies with more expediency, the bill guarantees continued effective governance.

SB 215 also changes notice requirements for budget hearings, the bill eliminates limitations on how towns must provide the budget summary and notice, instead allowing towns the same options as cities and villages.

Finally, under current law, every highway ceases to be a public highway four years from the date on which it was laid out, except the parts of the highway that have been opened, traveled, or worked within that time. The bill eliminates the travel exception from consideration by a town board in determining whether a highway has ceased to be a public highway.

These changes aim to enhance efficiency, responsiveness, and adaptability in local government. Thank you again, Chairman Tomczyk, for the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation. I'd be happy to answer any questions.



ALEX A. DALLMAN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 39TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Favor of Senate Bill 215

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk and committee members for allowing me to testify in favor of SB 215, which would provide four important updates to state statutes making it more efficient for town governments to operate. I also want to thank Senator Quinn for his leadership on this legislation.

If you ask any town government, finding people to be town clerks and town treasurers can be difficult. Also, there are current cumbersome and unclear state statutes specific to town governments. SB 215 aims to clean up statutes and help town governments operate more efficiently for the benefit of all town residents.

The first update allows towns, regardless of population, to appoint a clerk and/or treasurer by vote of the electors at a town meeting. SB 215 also allows towns to move to an appointed clerk and/or treasurer position in the middle of an elected term if the office becomes, or is, vacant. This change will allow all towns in Wisconsin the flexibility to find interested and qualified clerks and treasurers to fill a vacancy quickly rather than waiting until the next election.

The second update allows for a combined position of clerk and treasurer to take effect immediately when one position becomes vacant, if the occupying officer of the other position is appointed to the combined position. It also allows for each town treasurer to appoint one or more deputies and clarifies that a deputy clerk or deputy treasurer may perform duties designated by the treasurer. Oftentimes town governments have difficulties filling vacant positions for clerks and treasurers when they are a combined position, SB 215 helps fix this issue.

The third update creates consistency across all municipality types, in particular when it comes to noticing an annual public hearing on a proposed budget. Current law requires towns to post the summary and notice in three locations, whereas cities and villages are permitted to publish in a newspaper, post in three locations, or post in one location and on its official website. This bill would allow towns the same notice options as cities and villages by requiring that towns also provide notice of the public budget hearing as a class 1 notice under Chapter 985.

Finally, this bill would keep highway planning authority with the town by examining only whether the highway was opened or worked on when determining if the highway ceases to be a highway. Under current law, a town highway that has not been opened, worked, or traveled on within four years ceases to be a highway. However, this means that a planned, but never opened or worked on highway, remains a highway if any vehicle travels on it and shifts ultimate highway planning authority from the town to anyone that may drive along the planned highway. This bill would create more clarity and give town governments more authority over highways within their boundaries.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB 215 and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Dallman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alex A. Dallman
State Representative
39th Assembly District

ROCK COUNTY, WISCONSIN

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May 5, 2025

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government:

Testimony for Public Hearing – SB-215

Chair Tomczyk and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing public comment.

SB-215 relating to: town clerk and treasurer appointments, publication requirements for proposed budget summary and notice of public hearing, and discontinuance of highways.

Support

Currently, a town with a population under 2,500 can only move from an appointed clerk, treasurer or clerk/treasurer by holding a referendum at the April Spring Election or November Fall Election.

Since the 2020 elections, clerk turnover has increased. Towns with vacant elected clerk positions are having problems finding candidates to fill their vacancies. An elected clerk must reside within the town. An appointed clerk is not required to reside within the town. This gives the town a larger candidate pool to select from when vacancies occur.

Towns over 2,500 already have this option. Last year, my own town clerk wanted to retire at the end of the year before the end of his elected term. After months of searching, they found that there was no interest from anyone in the town. Since the town has a population of 2,567, they were allowed to make the change from elected to appointed at a meeting of electors. They were able to find a new clerk who resides in a neighboring municipality.

This bill is a positive change for our towns.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lisa Tollefson



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SHAWANO COUNTY CLERK – KARA SKARLUPKA

5/5/25

RE: SB215 – Town Clerk and treasurer appointments, publication requirements for proposed budget summary and notice of public hearing, and discontinuance of highways.

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
Senators: Tomczyk, Hutton, Wanggard, Carpenter and Spreitzer
Committee Chair: Chad Taylor

Hello,

I am currently the County Clerk for Shawano County with a population of 41,300. Within Shawano County we have 38 municipalities. Of the 38 municipalities, one city and one municipality are under 2,500 in population. I am also a municipal clerk of a township of 1,966.

This bill addresses elected vs appointed clerks and treasurers. In my township we FINALLY were able to get the referendum passed. Over the last 15 years, the township has tried numerous times to get it passed. We understand that there are pros and cons to elected vs appointed. Most prevalent pro is that the elector gets to choose the person for the office. Great in theory and maybe many years ago when there were people actually willing to run for the office it worked. No one wants these positions anymore elected or appointed. Especially with the uptick in scrutiny of elections, while the people mean well the job description get more involved every year with not much pay (in our area). With this being an appointed position with out a referendum it will be easier for a municipality to have a pool of qualified people because we can reach outside our rural municipality. As in many cases towns are next to larger cities which will help to find qualified people.

County wide I see many municipalities with out clerks and treasurers. At some point in time the position will get filled, but at election time they choose not to run. This is an inefficient way to run any municipality.

Notices for town budget public hearings, yes a municipality should have the option to post on a website and one location.

I have never dealt with the highway portion of this bill.

Thank you,
Kara Skarlupka
Shawano County Clerk
Town of Washington Clerk