



Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition Policy Update (4/26/2021)

Public Hearings on April 27 for Bills That Could Make It Harder for People with Disabilities and Older Adults to Vote

Wisconsin legislators are considering some voting bills that are scheduled for hearings this week. The bills could:

- Make it harder to vote for many voters, including voters with a disability and older adults.
- Make it more difficult for friends and neighbors to assist you with returning an absentee ballot.
- Restrict workers in nursing homes and group homes from offering residents assistance with voting.
- Put volunteers, clerks, and others at risk for prosecution for violating the new restrictions.

Hearing Information

- Tuesday, April 27 at 10:01 AM, [Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections](#) - Public Hearing
 - Includes AB 170, AB 178, AB 179, AB 198, AB 201
 - Rep. Brandtjen, Chair
 - [Link to hearing notice](#)

How to share your concerns

If you are concerned about these bills, you can share your comments at a hearing or submit comments in writing. Here are some options:

- Attend the hearing at the Capitol and provide testimony. Note: the committee is NOT offering a virtual option for public comments.
- Email your testimony to the Committee Clerk and ask that it be included in the public record. Email the clerk at Bill.Savage@legis.wisconsin.gov
- Questions about the process? Contact the Chairwoman Brandtjen's office at (608) 267-2367

- In your testimony, you will need to provide the bill numbers and whether you are speaking “in favor” or “against” a bill or for information only.

Sample testimony

[Your Name and a brief introduction about yourself (where you live, volunteer, work, etc.)]

I am concerned about the following bills (list the bill numbers) because they will make it harder for me (or people I care about) to vote.

[Tell your story: talk about how these bills will personally make it harder for you or someone you know to vote.]

As an American, few things are more important to me than my right to vote and ensuring all people, including people with disabilities, have that same opportunity. Please vote to support accessible and inclusive elections.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

SUMMARY OF VOTING BILLS SCHEDULED FOR HEARING April 27th Assembly Hearing at 10:01 AM

AB 179 / SB 205 Absentee Voting in residential care facilities

- Would limit voting rights of nursing home and group home residents.
- If staff offered to provide a resident with assistance, this would be a felony: *"No employee of a qualified retirement home ... may influence an occupant of the home or facility to apply for or not apply for an absentee ballot or cast or refrain from casting a ballot."* May conflict with federal law which requires nursing homes support the right of residents to vote.
- Care facility staff may be unwilling to provide residents with any assistance related to voting, due to fears about going to prison.
- This bill would require the administrator of the facility to notify relatives of the residents as to when the special voting deputies will be coming to the facility to assist in the casting of absentee ballots.

AB 198 / SB 212 Defects on Absentee Ballot Certificates

- Prohibits a municipal clerk from correcting a defect on the completed absentee ballot certificate envelope.

Example: *a witness for your absentee ballot forgets to complete their address. Currently the clerk may look up the address or contact the voter for information.*

- If there is a defect on the absentee ballot certificate envelope, the bill would require the clerk to return the ballot to the voter and post a notification on the elector's voter information page on MyVote website.

Concerns:

- Many voters don't have internet or device to access MyVote; they would be unaware of the problem, and not able to correct it.
- Mail is slow. There may not be time to return the ballot to the voter and for the voter to send it back to the clerk by the deadline. As a result, the vote would not be counted.

AB 201 / SB 204 Absentee Ballot Applications

- This bill makes it more difficult to absentee vote.
- Eliminates the option for indefinitely confined voters to receive absentee ballots automatically for every election.
- Would require all indefinitely confined voters to provide a photo ID with their absentee ballot request.
- Prohibits the WI Election Commission, clerks, and other groups from sending absentee ballot applications to all eligible voters; makes it a felony to mail absentee ballot applications to anyone who has not requested one.

What is an Indefinitely Confined Voter? If a voter has a hard time leaving their home to vote, due to age, illness, or disability, he/she may request an absentee ballot for every election and certify he/she is "indefinitely confined because of age, illness, infirmity, or disability". An indefinitely confined voter is not required to show a Photo ID when voting by absentee ballot. *Instead the witness verifies the voter's name and address "in lieu of providing identification.* [Wis Stats 6.87\(4\)\(b\)2](#)