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December 3, 2018

To: Joint Committee on Finance

Re: December 2018 Extraordinary Session Bills

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin has long held that the legislature must be responsible to the citizens. Our positions, which reflect careful grassroots research and consensus, state that legislative leaders, committees, and members should represent the state as a whole as well as their own districts. The legislature should make decisions that meet state needs while reconciling conflicting interests and priorities. Lawmakers should not act in their own partisan interests.

The Joint Committee on Finance is holding this hearing and will be voting today on bills that were introduced late Friday afternoon. It is likely that the Assembly will vote on this legislation tomorrow. Good legislation does not result from a rushed, secretive process with little opportunity for input from the public or even the agencies that will be charged with implementing the changes. Such a process results in sloppy errors and reeks of a partisan power grab.

Legislative changes introduced at the eleventh hour, like any bill, should be positive reforms offered in the interest of the people rather than in partisan reaction to the results of an election. With that in mind we make the following comments about the bills before us today:

Opposition to AB 1071

The League believes Wisconsin citizens should have maximum opportunities to obtain a ballot and vote, including opportunities for absentee and "early" voting. We strongly oppose the proposal to move the presidential primary to a date in March. This option would suppress the vote by causing voter confusion. It is no surprise that county and municipal clerks from around the state oppose this proposal, because it would be logistically impossible to implement. It would waste millions of local government dollars and possibly have disastrous consequences if a recount is needed between elections. Some specific problems include:

- Ballot tabulators are programmed to read polling-place specific ballots, and all tabulators are tested by the county and municipality. There is simply not enough time to interject

another election between the already-short timeline between the February Primary and the April Election.

- Past spring elections have cost around \$7 million statewide. A much larger amount would be needed to carry out an additional election in the same period.
- Voters could be disenfranchised. If a voter on the permanent absentee ballot list failed to return a ballot for a March election, the clerk could decide not to send a ballot for the April election.
- Clerks have to update voter registrations in the WisVote system after each election. It would be difficult to do this with such closely-spaced elections.
- Municipal and county clerks would be engaging in overlapping elections with separate ballots. This is extremely unwise from security and procedural perspectives.
- The dates when clerks may conduct in-person absentee voting are currently under court order. No changes should be considered until the 7th Circuit has ruled.

Concerns about AB 1069

Section 1 of this bill could undercut the principles of "complete streets" which accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and public transit, not just trucks and cars. We support the Complete Streets principles, and we object to the transferring of transportation funds to avoid following federal requirements related to prevailing wage and environmental concerns, which include "complete streets."

According to US DOT Guidelines, "Complete Streets approaches vary based on community context. They may address a wide range of elements, such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, bus lanes, public transportation stops, crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, modified vehicle travel lanes, roundabouts, streetscape, and landscape treatments." The State must consider these elements when using federal transportation dollars.

Opposition to AB 1072, AB 1070 and AB 1073

The League of Women Voters supports a healthy system of checks and balances among the three branches of government. This principle protects the people from power grabs and holds government officials accountable. AB 1072, AB 1070 and AB 1073 are complex bills which are difficult to analyze in such a rushed environment. However, they clearly upset the current balance of powers in a significant manner. Given the fact that the voters have just chosen a change in statewide leadership, these bills are a source of grave concern.

AB 1072 eliminates the current authority of the Executive Branch to manage the operations of multiple programs designed to assist low income children and families. It requires legislative review, primarily through the Joint Committee on Finance, of many traditional managerial activities, including allocation of funds among subsidiary programs, modification of client reporting requirements, communication and negotiation with the appropriate agencies of the Federal government, and control of implementation timelines.

The League of Women Voters believes that all U.S. residents should have access to affordable quality health care. We further believe, as do many members of this committee, that employment in jobs that pay a living wage is undoubtedly the most effective means to move families out of poverty. We have previously argued, based on these beliefs, that the Badger Care Reform waiver, approved on October 31, 2018, could not achieve its stated goals, and should not be submitted or approved.

Now it has been approved, although not yet been implemented in Wisconsin. However, parts of it have been implemented in Arkansas, where 12,000 people have lost their Medicaid coverage after work requirements were imposed. So far, we have no information about how that happened, or whether those individuals have obtained health insurance through some other means.

The state's Executive Branch includes hundreds of professionals who operate state programs, and it must have the flexibility to respond to their research, the evidence based on experience here in Wisconsin and that learned from other states. The capacity to digest this information and make rationale managerial decisions requires the input of the Executive Branch agencies charged with the implementation of laws.

We oppose AB 1070 because it would allow legislative leaders to intervene in court cases and hire their own attorneys at taxpayer expense when state laws are challenged, replacing the Attorney General. This legislation also allows the budget committee, rather than the Governor, to approve withdrawal from lawsuits. This is a power grab by the legislative branch.

The League of Women Voters urges you to reject AB 1072, AB 1070 and AB 1073, which introduce significant changes in the balance of powers in Wisconsin government. Such changes should not be made without full consideration and ample citizen input. There is no need to make these changes now other than to disregard the will of the voters who have elected new leadership in the Executive Branch.

In the distinguished tradition of bipartisanship in Wisconsin, we expect our state leaders to work together in the coming years to carry out a smooth transition of power and serve the people of our entire state.