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Bills Adversely Impact Voters Living with Vision Loss and People with Disabilities

This week, state Assembly representatives are scheduled to vote on legislation that will make it more difficult for many people with disabilities and older adults to vote. The Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired opposes the following bills included on this week's Assembly calendar: AB192, SB 204/AB 201, SB 205/AB 179, SB 212/AB 198.

"Individuals with vision impairments and blindness, currently face significant barriers to voting, including not having an accessible absentee ballot," said Denise Jess, Council CEO/Executive Director. "These bills place even greater barriers and further disenfranchise us from the right to vote."

While amendments have slightly improved some of the voting bills, the proposed legislation will create new barriers that may leave behind many voters with disabilities. Disability advocates are willing to work with policy makers to inform them about how these bills

would negatively impact voters with disabilities. Advocates can also offer recommendations to address accessibility barriers for people with disabilities and older adults to improve their full participation in the electoral process.

A significant number of Wisconsin voters have a disability or live with vision loss. As state policy makers consider changes to voting laws, they must proceed with caution to avoid creating new barriers that could impact the voting rights of hundreds of thousands of state residents with a disability, including disabilities acquired through aging. We encourage legislators to slow the process down and work with us to craft legislation supporting accessible and inclusive elections.

The mission of the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired is to promote the dignity and empowerment of the people in Wisconsin who are blind or visually impaired by providing services, advocating legislation, and educating the general public. To learn more about the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired, visit www.WCBlind.org.

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