



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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June 8, 2021

## Aging Advocates Concerned Voting Bills Pose Additional Barriers

The **Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network** is a collaborative group of individuals and associations working with and for Wisconsin's older adults to shape public policy to improve their quality of life.

### Core member organizations:

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW)

Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter

Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA)

Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A)

Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS)

Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND)

Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC)

Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA)

Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (WISCA)

Wisconsin Tribal Aging Unit Association

Voting is a high priority for older adults. Despite a strong desire to vote, as people age, there are often barriers standing between their desire to vote and being able to vote. The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) is concerned voting bills scheduled for a vote in the State Senate this week will create additional barriers to voting for older adults and people with disabilities.

Absentee voting is a very important option for older voters and voters with disabilities, including those voters in nursing homes and other residential care facilities, for many reasons. Health conditions and disabilities create challenges for some voters, making it difficult for them to vote in person. Among the most significant challenges people face are trouble walking and standing. Additionally, some voters who are older and/or have disabilities are non-drivers. Limited and/or lack of transportation makes it difficult for people to get to the polls, as well as creates challenges for those needing to get photo IDs, go to their clerks' offices, make copies of photo IDs, and visit public places – libraries, etc. where computers/internet access is available. For these reasons, it is not surprising that absentee voting is generally more heavily utilized by older voters. Older adult voters also make up a large percentage of the voters who request an indefinitely confined status designation.

“Limited access to transportation, technology, and personal assistance with voter registration and absentee voting applications have already proven to be significant barriers for some older voters,” said Robert Kellerman, Executive Director of the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging, Inc. and chair of WAAN, “We urge legislators to work with aging and disability advocates to address the existing barriers and not pass proposed bills that would make voting even harder for older adults and people with disabilities to vote.”

Though recently introduced amendments have slightly improved some of the bills, aging and disability advocates remain concerned older voters and voters with disabilities will be negatively impacted.

The bills we are most concerned about include:

- SB 204 which eliminates the option for indefinitely confined voters to receive an absentee ballot for every election and would require all indefinitely confined voters to provide a photo ID with their absentee ballot request,

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- SB 205 which would make it harder for voters who live in nursing homes and other residential care facilities to vote and would restrict staff members from offering information about voter registration or information about applying for an absentee ballot. Additionally, the bill requires the facility to notify residents' relatives as to when special voting deputies will be coming to the facility to assist in the casting of absentee ballots,
- SB 206 which would require voters to provide statements under oath and renew their indefinitely confined voter status every two years, and
- SB 209 which limits drop boxes for absentee ballots to one that is attached to the building where the municipal clerk's office is located.

WAAN encourages our state leaders to take the necessary steps to ensure safe, accessible voting is available to all eligible voters.

*The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network is a collaborative group of 10 statewide associations and numerous individuals working with and for Wisconsin's older adults to shape public policy to improve their quality of life.*

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