



1-844-DIS-VOTE
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New Bills Could Make It Harder for People with Disabilities, Older Adults and People of Color to Vote (rev 5/7/2021)

Wisconsin legislators have introduced bills that will make it harder for many Wisconsinites to vote and will be voting on the bills very soon.

The bills could:

- Make it harder to absentee vote. Absentee voting is important to many voters with disabilities due to lack of transportation, inaccessible polling places, and mobility concerns.
- Limit who can 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.

How to share your concerns

State legislators will be voting on these bills as soon as May 11th.

If these issues are important to you, tell your legislators about your concerns.

- Let them know how the voting bills will impact you and will make it harder for many Wisconsinites with disabilities and older adults to vote.
- Share the barriers that you or other voters with disabilities or older adults may experience, such as transportation, no photo ID, accessibility issues, etc.
- Ask them to work with the disability and aging communities to address barriers to voting and ensure accessible elections.
- See the sample letter on the last page of this document.

To find out who your state legislators are:

- Call the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-362-9472 or
- Click on "Who Are My Legislators?" on the [Wisconsin State Legislature Home Page](#)

Questions? Contact the DRW Voter Hotline at 844-347-8683 or email info@disabilityvote.org.

SUMMARY OF VOTING BILLS

SB 203 / AB 192: Secure Delivery of Absentee Ballots

- Would limit options to obtain and return absentee ballots.
- Prohibits any individual from helping more than one non-family member to return their absentee ballot.
- Limits who can return a voter's absentee ballot to the voter's immediate family or legal guardian, with very limited exceptions. Anyone else returning a ballot for another voter would be guilty of a Class 1 felony.
- **Concerns:**
 - Many absentee voters are non-drivers and may rely on friends, neighbors, extended family, or others to deliver their absentee ballot to the clerk or to a secure drop box.
 - These new restrictions will be very confusing. If voters have immediate family in the state, they cannot have someone else assist them, even if their family lives hours away or refuses to help.
 - Voters should have the freedom to choose the person they trust to return their absentee ballot – not have it dictated by government

SB 204 / AB 201: Absentee Ballot Applications

- 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.
- **Concerns**
 - Requiring indefinitely confined voters to request an absentee ballot for each election and provide a copy of photo ID each time eliminates the accommodations which are so important to these voters.

SB 206 / AB 180: Returning Absentee Indefinitely Confined Voter

- Would limit rights of voters who certify as "indefinitely confined".
- Voters would be required to provide statements under oath.
- Voters under 65 would need to have their statements signed by their doctors. A false statement would be a felony.
- Voters would need to renew their status every two years. Currently, they receive an absentee ballot for every election for as long needed.

- **Concerns:**

- It is outside of a health care role for medical professionals to complete voting paperwork and they may refuse to do so. Indefinitely confined voters may have difficulty getting to the doctor's office. Since this is not a medical visit it would not be covered by insurance; the voter would have to pay.
- Having to renew the status every two years eliminates the permanent absentee voter status which is so important to these voters.

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](#)

SB 205 / AB 179: Absentee Voting in Residential Care Facilities

- Proposes criminal penalties for staff in nursing homes and residential care facilities to restrict them from assisting residents with voting.
- Any action by staff that influences an eligible resident voter to request an absentee ballot or refrain from doing so would be a Class I felony.
- This bill would require the administrator of the facility to notify residents' relatives as to when the special voting deputies will be coming to the facility to assist in the casting of absentee ballots. It does not provide residents with the choice of whom or if they wish to have family members observe their voting.
- **Concerns**
 - This may conflict with federal law which requires nursing homes to support and affirm the right of residents to vote.
 - Will make it harder for residents to vote. Staff will be afraid to provide information or assistance, due to criminal penalties.
 - It is important for staff to let residents know that an election is coming up, and that residents may request assistance if they want to register to vote, request an absentee ballot, or need assistance completing a ballot.
 - The role of staff is to assist residents with voting as directed by the resident and not to influence their choices – that would be illegal under current law.

SB 207 / AB 173: Private Resources Used for an Election / Appointment of Poll Workers

- Would restrict who can serve as a poll worker. Prohibits employees of an issue advocacy group from serving as poll workers.
- Would prohibit municipalities from applying for or accepting donations or grant moneys for purposes of election administration.
- **Concerns:**
 - Would prohibit employees of groups who advocate for voting rights, or for people with disabilities from serving as poll workers. Wisconsin currently has a shortage of poll workers.
 - Some municipalities have used donations and grant funding to address accessibility and curbside voting.
 - Grant funding funded health and safety precautions during COVID.

SB 209 / AB 177: Returning Absentee Ballots / Ballot Drop Boxes

- Limits absentee drop boxes to a single location attached to the clerk's permanent office.
- Sets standards for drop boxes including that they be tamper resistant, moisture-proof, and satisfy the accessibility requirements under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. ADA accessibility requirements would be a very positive thing.
- **Concerns:**
 - Reducing drop box locations will limit options for nondrivers and other voters to return their absentee ballot.

SB 212 / AB 198: 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 fully 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 clerk must 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 by the deadline.

SB 214 / AB 310: Re: Early Canvassing of Absentee Ballots, Combined Polling Places.

- Authorizes any city, village, or town with a population of less than 35,000 to enter into an agreement to share a polling place with an adjacent community having a population of less than 35,000.
- Allows municipal clerks to start canvassing the absentee ballots the day before the election, which could be helpful for clerks.
- **Concerns:**
 - Transportation is already a significant barrier for many voters, combining polling sites would only increase this challenge.

CONTACTING STATE LEGISLATORS – SAMPLE EMAIL/LETTER

Here is an example of an email/letter you can send to your legislators:

Email Subject Line: Include the bill numbers

Dear Sen./Rep. ***[Name of Elected Official]***,

I am writing to share my concerns about the following bills because they will make it harder to vote (add the number of the bills you are concerned about). ***[Briefly introduce yourself – if you live in the district, where you volunteer, work, etc]***

As an American, few things are more important to me than my right to vote and ensuring all people, regardless of their disability, age, race, or where they live, have that same opportunity.

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

For these reasons and more, I ask you to vote against these bills and to support accessible and inclusive elections. Thank you for reading my email and taking my voice into consideration.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Email]
[Your Address]