



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# DON PRIDEMORE

March 5, 2014

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to thank Chairwoman Lazich and the members of the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of AB202.

Current law allows any member of the public to be present at a polling place to observe an election. These election observers play a very important role in our transparent election system in both maintaining that the voting process stays in accordance with the laws and monitoring for instances of possible voter fraud.

The Government Accountability Board's administrative rule relating to observers is as follows: *"When physically feasible within the polling place, the observation area shall not be less than 6 feet nor more than 12 feet from the table at which electors are announcing their name and address and being issued a voter number."* However, this idea of *"when feasible"* does not fit the requirement under state statute that *"Designated observation areas shall be so positioned to permit any authorized individual to readily observe all public aspects of the voting process."* I would contend that an observer is not able to properly view the process when standing 12 feet away.

AB202, as amended and passed through the Assembly, addresses this issue by requiring the chief inspector or municipal clerk to designate an observation area for observers that is "not less than 3 feet from nor more than 8 feet from" the table where voters announce their name and address to be issued a voter number, as well as the table where voters may register to vote.

In addition, this legislation requires an election observer to print his or her name, sign, and date a log maintained for the polling place.

In closing, AB202 further ensures the citizenry's right to observe within practical distance and provides a safeguard for fair elections. I thank you for your time and would be happy to answer any questions you might have or address any of your concerns.

Sincerely,

Rep. Don Pridemore



Board of Election Commissioners

Commissioners  
Stephanie Findley  
David H. Redemann  
Robert F. Spindell, Jr.

Executive Director  
Neil V. Albrecht

March 5, 2014

Senator Mary Lazich, Chair

Senate Committee on Elections and Urban Affairs

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on elections and Urban Affairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for the Senate Committee on Elections and Urban Affairs March 5th public hearing. I regret that I am unable to appear in person as I must prepare for the Spring Election. The City of Milwaukee opposes AB202, a bill that would change Wisconsin's Election Day observer rules.

While established relatively recently, Wisconsin's observer rules are now recognized by election workers and observers across the state.

AB202 redefines the proximity with which an observer can be placed with regard to voters and confidential documents. Currently, observers may be positioned by the Chief Inspector at not less than six (6) feet and not more than twelve (12) feet from election activity. I believe that great consideration was given in the determination of this range as it represents a balance of transparent elections with maintaining the confidential aspects of same day registration.

Under AB202, the range would be changed to not less than three (3) feet and not more than eight (8) feet.

Please consider the following:

- The minimum distance in the range, proposed in this bill as not less than three (3) feet, sets an expectation for observers of sitting within three feet of election processes.
- The confidentiality of information and documents presented by a person registering to vote should be a paramount concern when considering the proximity of the public to a voter registration table. Three feet is slightly over an arm's length away. Breaches in confidentiality are a certainty.
- Many voters, particularly voters producing confidential documents, will be intimidated by observers that are sitting or standing at such close proximity to voting or registration activity.



Board of Election Commissioners

**Commissioners**  
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- While the tasks performed by election workers must be transparent, election workers should also be allowed to perform their duties in an environment that is conducive to concentration, the exchange of information with each other, and establishing a certain level of trust with voters, particularly those registering. Allowing a person to sit three feet away compromises these standards and has the potential to create a very stressful environment for individuals that are demonstrating a great spirit of civic responsibility by serving as election workers.
- Election observers play a key role in ensuring transparent and accurate elections. Ninety-five percent assume this role with an exceptional level of professionalism and behave in a manner that is entirely compliant with polling place rules. The remaining 5% can be disregarding of the observer rules and challenging to a Chief Inspector's ability to maintain order at a polling place. While representing only a small fraction of observers, the individuals that disrupt the operations of a polling place must be considered when setting observer rules.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns, and on behalf of the City of Milwaukee, I urge you to oppose AB202.

Sincerely,

Neil Albrecht, Executive Director  
City of Milwaukee Election Commission

March 4, 2014

To The Members of the Senate Elections and Urban Affairs Committee  
Senator Mary Lazich, Chairman  
Re Assembly Bill 202

I am unable to attend the committee hearing on Wednesday, March 5, 2014 but AB 202.

The Wisconsin State Statute 7.41 codifies and recognizes the value and important elections process. Observers are by statute assigned a critical role designed to help of Wisconsin's elections.

The Government Accountability Board in its Administrative Rule #4 acknowledges of Wisconsin's open and transparent elections process".

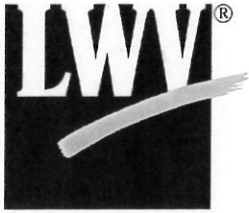
AB 202 offers a legislative compromise respecting the right of the public to both Wisconsin's elections open to public observation. AB 202 will allow observers to registration and ballot tables which is an improvement over the current 6-12 foot

The right of an observer to both see and hear is often made difficult because may be very noisy. The current rule of 6-12 feet does not always allow the observer to poll worker to loudly repeat a voter's name so the observer can hear is a distraction poll workers. AB 202 will allow observers closer to what they are entitled to see them to do the job they have volunteered to do.

AB 202 encourages a more positive and cooperative attitude by all—the voters, poll observers-- at the polling place and helps reassure that voting is done according to elections. Respecting the role of the observer will reassure the voting public that and transparent

Please vote to approve AB 202.

Thank you for considering my views,  
Mary Ann Hanson  
3740 Mountain Drive  
Brookfield, Wisconsin 53045



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN

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March 5, 2014

To: Senate Committee on Elections and Urban Affairs

Re: Opposition to Assembly Bill 202

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin supports the Government Accountability Board's election observer rules, which were developed with input from both major political parties in addition to advocacy organizations including the League. The rules were thoughtfully formulated to offer reasonable opportunity for observers to monitor polling place activities without disrupting the voting process. They place election observers 6 to 12 feet from the registration and check-in tables where poll workers interact with voters. As an organization that has placed hundreds of trained observers in the polls in cities, towns and villages across the state, we have found this regulation to be both acceptable and reasonable.

The amended bill which was passed by the Assembly would allow observers to stand not less than 3 feet nor more than 8 feet from the table where voters announce their name and address to be issued a voter number or the table where voters register to vote. Under this stipulation, observers could very well be standing over poll workers as they do their work and intimidating voters.

While transparency is key to ensuring clean elections, voters should be assured privacy as they interact with election officials – just as they have privacy in interactions with other government officials. Election observers do not need to be able to read completed registration forms or proof of residence documents, which often have private information such as birth dates and account numbers.

The role of observers is to ensure that election officials are doing their job, not to do it for them. Anyone who wants to do the poll worker's job should apply to be a poll worker. Goodness knows we need them. Election officials generally are not highly paid, if at all, and they should not have to work with observers breathing down their necks.

Election Day is not about the political parties, or the interest groups, or even the candidates. It is about the voters. It is the time when citizens of the greatest democracy in the world go to the polls, register if we need to, and cast a private ballot with our best guess for what will improve the future of our nation, state or community. It is the one time when we are all equal; each citizen has one vote, regardless of race, creed, gender or economic status. The voting process should be orderly and efficient, and the polling place should not be a battleground.

We urge you to "put voters first" by rejecting this bill, which would compromise voters' sense of privacy, put pressure on poll workers trying to do their job and make polling places more contentious.

The League of Women Voters opposes AB 202, and we urge you to do the same.



Nathan Hoffmann  
Wisconsin Voices  
Testimony Elections and Urban Affairs  
March 5, 2014

Thank you for the time Madam Chair. My name is Nathan Hoffmann, I work with Wisconsin Voices, which is a table organization for non-partisan non-profits in Wisconsin with 95 member organizations.

Our organization has convened a table for groups interested in supporting election policies that maintain Wisconsin's tradition of access to the polls for every qualified Wisconsin citizen.

In the 2013-14 legislative session we've seen nearly a dozen bills presented that are designed to restrict access to the polls, each have received hearings in either the Senate or Assembly, while the few bills designed to improve or modernize our elections have been dying quietly.

Assembly Bill 202 is alarming. This is a bill that appears to be designed to increase conflict and confrontation in poll locations.

In the 2012 elections, I served as a roaming poll observer for the non-partisan Election Protection. As a non-lawyer observer, my job was simply to contact a member of our legal team if there was a disturbance at a polling location.

That year, there was an increase in hyper-partisan observers in polling locations. To understand it better, I went to an election observer training hosted by the organization True the Vote. I met some dedicated, friendly, and kind hearted people at that meeting who were concerned about making sure every vote was counted and stopping any potential fraud.

What we heard was an hour long presentation demonizing the other side with undocumented stories of busses of out of state voters, people roaming to multiple voting locations to cast multiple ballots, and even stories of their volunteers given food poisoning and being locked in the bathroom. They were

told the fraud happens at the registration table and they needed to watch it like an eagle.

The newly recruited volunteers were sent out to the polls with an unrealistic paranoia feeling deputized to stop rampant fraud.

There have never been documented cases of busses bringing in out of state voters and we should all know that voting in multiple locations is rare and easily detected voter fraud – it seems as though the volunteers were fed lies to put them on alert and be fearful.

In some cases, due to the fear created by training programs, hyper-partisan observers became unruly. In one instance at a polling location in Milwaukee's Northwest side an election observer was practically running the polling location when I arrived. The clerk was intimidated by her refusal to stay behind the taped off area. She was yelling towards voters asking them their names if she didn't hear it and even had poll workers bringing proof of residency forms to get her sign-off. What was even more disturbing was that I witnessed her writing down names of young and black voters, but practically ignoring white voters.

She was eventually removed by the District Attorney office, but it was only after she had disrupted peak voting hours with unbearably long lines, and had intimidated countless voters through her hostile approach.

The only reason to decrease the distance to the sign in and voter registration tables are to embolden and aide these bad actors at polling locations. If an election observer witnesses a problem, it should be taken to the chief election observer. They should not be within range of poll workers or voters to try to address issues on their own.

Current law protects poll workers, and allows for privacy of personal documents. I ask for you to vote against AB 202 and find ways to restore order to Wisconsin elections.

Thank you for your time.



**TO:** Members, Senate Elections and Urban Affairs Committee

**FROM:** Scot Ross, Executive Director One Wisconsin Now

**DATE:** March 5, 2014

**RE:** Assembly Bill 202

The harassment and intimidation of volunteer poll workers and voters has no place in our elections.

Laws that could facilitate such behavior have no place in our state statutes.

But instead of taking steps to protect voters and workers in our polling places, Assembly Bill 202, before the committee today, would enshrine in statute protections for bad actors.

Numerous, reprehensible incidents reported in polling places compelled the Government Accountability Board to adopt guidelines to help make sure that our elections run smoothly and that workers and voters are free from intimidation and harassment.

There have been no corresponding reports of widespread denial of access to observers in polling places.

Advancing legislation that statutorily requires people to be allowed as little as three feet away from volunteer poll workers creates an environment ripe for abuse.

Our state constitution explicitly guarantees the right of the every qualified citizen of Wisconsin to have a say in the direction of his or her community via the franchise.

Our laws ought to help people do their civic duty and cast their ballots. They ought to protect their right to do so, free from harassment and intimidation.

Today you have a choice.

I urge you to choose to protect the rights of the legal voters participating in our democracy instead of abiding the behavior of bullies in our polling places.

Reject Assembly Bill 202.