



Mary Lazich

State Senator - Senate District 28

Senate Committee on Elections and Urban Affairs March 5, 2014 Senate Bill 655

Good afternoon and thank you committee members and the public for your attention.

Senate Bill 655 (SB 655) modernizes and improves Wisconsin campaign finance law. The bill modernizes statutes for technology advancements, harmonizes state law with federal law, and updates outdated statutory provisions.

SB 655 removes an unnecessary and burdensome regulation requiring campaign finance registrants to submit electronic filings and a hard copy. The bill allows a registrant to submit an electronic signature or a hard copy of the signature page, rather than a hard copy of the entire report.

SB 655 updates campaign finance statutes reflecting the prevalence of internet activity. SB 655 complies with Federal Election Commission rules and specifies volunteer internet activity and is outside of the scope of regulation. This ensures voluntary activity such as Facebook postings and blog entries are not subject to burdensome campaign finance regulations.

If, however, a payment is made for a communication to the general public for a political purpose, the activity is subject to reporting requirements. Similarly, the purchase or rental of email address lists is reportable activity.

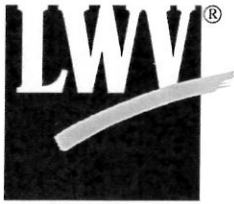
The bill increases the threshold for registration of referenda activity from \$25 to \$2,500. The bill increases the registration threshold for individuals from \$25 to \$1,000 and committees from \$25 to \$500.

The bill includes a date change for lobbyist contributions to candidates. The date is changed to align with the date for taking out nomination forms for an election. In most cases, this change is from June 1 to April 15. This complies with date changes in the federal MOVE Act.

SB 655 clarifies the definition of the word, furnish. Lobbyists may not furnish things of value or personal contributions to legislators during prohibited times. Lobbyists may deliver PAC or conduit checks.

Another housekeeping measure in the bill solves a problem with conduit accounts. A contributor must grant permission before a contribution may be removed from a conduit account. Under existing law a problem arises at the time the original contributor becomes unavailable, relocates, or dies. SB 655 permits funds to revert back to the sponsoring PAC or administrative account for the conduit after 10 unsuccessful and documented contact attempts during a two year period. The bill permits a contributor's spouse or executor to authorize release of conduit funds.

SB 655 makes needed improvements and updates to campaign finance law, and I hope I have your support to approve SB 655.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN

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March 5, 2014

To: Senate Committee on Elections and Urban Affairs

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill 654 and Senate Bill 655 – content and process

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin strongly opposes SB 654 and SB 655, based on our core belief that our state and nation thrive when citizens are well informed and actively engaged as participants in their government. The responsibility of good government rests on the shoulders of its citizens, who must be well informed. Indeed, eight of nine U.S. Supreme Court Justices in the *Citizens United* decision wrote of the need for stronger disclosure laws. SB 654 would take us in the opposite direction, making it more difficult, in fact virtually impossible, for citizens to know who is funding the so-called “issue ads” designed to influence our elections.

SB 655 increases from \$25 to \$500 the spending limit that determines when a group has to register as a campaign committee. This would result in fewer groups required to report their expenditures and less information available to citizens. The bill also extends the time during which lobbyists may make campaign contributions, increasing the potential and likelihood that such contributions will be used to influence legislation.

The legislation you are considering today has many other provisions, but there was very little time between when it was introduced and today’s public hearing, making it impossible for many concerned groups and citizens to provide input. These bills would have serious effects on voters’ ability to be active and informed participants in government, and to rush such legislation through the process is inexcusable.

The League of Women Voters opposes SB 654 and SB 655, and we urge you to do the same.



Correspondence Memorandum

Date: Wednesday, March 05, 2014

To: Members of Senate Elections & Urban Affairs

From: Association of Wisconsin Lobbyists

Re: Testimony in Favor of Senate Bill 655

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of Senate Bill 655 – changes to campaign finance and lobbying laws.

The Association of Wisconsin Lobbyists (AWL) was formed to protect and advance the rights of the governed and is committed to facilitating high professional standards by keeping members informed of regulatory law, administrative rules and other applicable policies. As a voluntary association for government relations professionals, the AWL is committed to facilitating high professional standards and takes any changes to the law in the area of campaign finance reform and lobbying seriously.

The following items contained in SB 655 were identified by the AWL Board of Directors and its current members as issues that should be addressed in any reform proposal. We respectfully request your support of these recommendations and your vote in favor of SB 655.

“Furnishing” Contributions – Clarify definition of “furnish”. Any proposed legislation should address the G.A.B.’s erroneous interpretation of “furnish” to include the delivery of campaign contributions by a lobbyist. As AWL’s members are very aware, the G.A.B. interprets “furnish” extremely broadly so that lobbyists are prohibited outside the contribution window from either delivering contributions from others or even discussing fundraising with a state legislator. While AWL has taken a position against this broad interpretation, the G.A.B. does not appear willing to change its position without a statutory directive.

Redirection of Conduit Funds – Add/Amend language to existing language to ensure existing conduit participants are grandfathered. With a grandfathering change, we are supportive of allowing conduit administrators and their sponsoring organizations to redirect conduit funds of persons that have been “unreachable” for two years following four unsuccessful and documented contact attempts.

Thank you for your consideration of these specific portions of SB 655.

March 5, 2014

TO: Committee on Elections and Urban Affairs
FROM: Joe Murray, Wisconsin REALTORS Association
RE: SB 655

Senate Bill 655 is a collection of changes to Chapter 11. The WRA has an interest in three provisions.

Electronic Filing – SB 655 allows for electronic signatures on reports and eliminates the need to file duplicate paper reports. This is a good, common sense change.

Conduit Funds – Includes the provision allowing for redirection of conduit contributions when you cannot find the conduit member. The funds need to have been held for 24 months and at least 10 attempts were made to contact the individual. The bill would allow for surviving spouse or executor to also redirect the contribution. This provision will help facilitate smoother administration of the conduit.

Corporate Solicitation – The bill eliminates the \$500 solicitation cap for corporate sponsors of PACs/conduits. Lifting the cap is long overdue.