



AB 369 Membership of Federated Library System Boards

Testimony of Senator Steve Nass

Assembly Committee on Urban & Local Affairs

October 15, 2015 • 328 Northwest, State Capitol

Thank you Chairman Brooks for allowing me to provide testimony in support of Assembly Bill 369. This legislation will reduce the minimum number of board members for a federated public library system that has territory in two or more counties from 15 to 11. The bill maintains the same current maximum number of members, which is 20. We introduced AB 369 at the request of Waukesha and Jefferson Counties.

Wisconsin's library systems provide important services to our public libraries to help them achieve maximum operational efficiency and increase access to library resources for all Wisconsin citizens. There are currently 17 library systems in Wisconsin and every county is a member of one of these systems. Library system membership is based on county affiliation.

The change in board membership size will continue to allow for fair representation in multi-county library systems and encourage future efficiencies and cost savings by providing library systems with increased flexibility. The number 11 was chosen because it is the smallest odd number that allows all library systems in Wisconsin the ability to continue to offer fair representation by county.

In my district, Jefferson County, a member of the Mid-Wisconsin Federated Library System, conducted a study recently on other library systems to join, and chose the Waukesha County Federated Library System. Waukesha County is now in the process of transitioning from a single county library system to a two-county library system.

Under existing law, the Waukesha County Federated Library System Board would have to more than double its size to add Jefferson County to the system. Increasing the board size would be unnecessarily expensive and was one of the negatives cited during discussions on the change that is otherwise beneficial to both Jefferson and Waukesha Counties. This change would not require any library system board to reduce its size, but would give boards that option.

AB 369 is supported by the Wisconsin Library Association, the Department of Public Instruction's Division for Libraries and Technology, and a number of individual counties and library systems who will testify today.

"In God We Trust"

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Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of AB 369. If any committee members have questions on this bill, I would be happy to help answer them at this time. Individuals from Waukesha and Jefferson Counties and other library groups will also be testifying in support of this legislation to provide additional information on any technical questions.



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Date: October 15th, 2015

To: Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs

From: Representative Cody Horlacher

Re: Assembly Bill 369-membership of certain federated public library system boards.

Chairman Brooks and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a public hearing on AB 369, related to the membership of certain federated public library system boards. This bill was introduced at the request of Waukesha and Jefferson Counties.

Wisconsin's library systems provide important services to our public libraries to help them achieve maximum operational efficiency and increase access to library resources for all Wisconsin citizens. There are currently 17 library systems in Wisconsin and every county is a member of one of these systems. Library system membership is based on county affiliation.

This is a common sense piece of legislation with bipartisan support in both houses that will allow library boards comprised of two or more counties the option to have a minimum of 11 members on the board. The number 11 was chosen because it is the smallest odd number that allows all library systems in Wisconsin the ability to continue to offer fair representation by county. This legislation does not affect the maximum number of members, which will remain at 20. Every library system is unique and it should be up to the local members to determine the best size for their needs.

In my district, Jefferson County, a member of the Mid-Wisconsin Federated Library System Board, conducted a study recently on other library systems to join and chose the Waukesha County Federated Library System. Waukesha County is now in the process of transitioning from a single county library system to a two-county system.

This bill would not mandate that library boards have only 11 members, it simply allows those boards the option to have a board of that size rather than 15 members.

AB 369 is supported by the Wisconsin Library Association, the Department of Public Instruction's Division for Libraries and Technology, and a number of individual counties and library systems who will testify today.

I ask for your support of AB 369. This common sense legislation will streamline library boards and allow locals to make decisions that are in the best interest of them. I welcome any questions you may have.



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Testimony from Connie Meyer, Director of the Waukesha County Federated Library System/Bridges Library System

Thank you Chair Brooks for scheduling this public hearing and allowing me the opportunity to comment on the proposed legislation--Assembly Bill 369. Thank you to each of the committee members for your consideration of this change.

The Waukesha County Library System was approached by Jefferson County in 2014 about the possibility of merging our two counties into a two-county library system. Waukesha County Federated Library System, a single county library system, then embarked on a study to determine whether or not we wanted to make this change.

There were many positives identified using a number of benchmarks. However, as we studied the pros and cons of the idea, it became clear to us that there was a potential negative for us in the statute that prescribes the size of a library system board for multi-county systems. Our current library system board size--as a single county library system--is seven. That board size has worked exceedingly well for us throughout our history. To add Jefferson County, under the current statute, would require us to more than double the size of our board to 15 members—just by adding 25% more population.

Ultimately, the decision was made to move forward together beginning on January 1, 2016 when Waukesha and Jefferson Counties will become the Bridges Library System. However, the goal of seeking a change to the statute that would allow us to grow our board in a manageable way, rather than more than doubling in size, did become a part of our work plan to implement the change.

We strongly support SB265 because it would allow us to add fewer members to our board resulting in efficiencies for us and would still allow appropriate representation for each county, based on proportional population as set forth in the statute. This change in statute would also benefit any other multi-county library system that might find it beneficial to have a smaller size board.

Reducing the minimum number from 15 to 11 would not *require* any library system to change its current board size. It would simply allow boards to downsize if that was determined to be locally beneficial. The number 11 was selected after conversations among the library community. This change would allow greater flexibility for diverse circumstances. We urge your support. Thank you.

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