



TIMOTHY RAMTHUN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

02/11/2020

Testimony on Assembly Bill 834, Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

Chairman Tusler and Members of the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections,

Thank you for holding a public hearing today and allowing me to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 834, which seeks to require public notice of noncandidacy for incumbent local elected officials.

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of any representative democracy. In order for the public to have confidence in the process and results of any election, transparency and openness are absolutely critical.

In any election, if the incumbent files with the office of record a notification of non-candidacy or fails to file a notification of candidacy by a certain deadline, the seat is considered 'open'. Under current law, there is no requirement for the office of record to provide public notice of an open seat for county and local elections, only state elections. Assembly Bill 834 will bring local-level non-candidacy notices in line with state-level requirements.

This bill, with the substitute amendment, would require any office of record for non-state elections (school board, local, county, etc.) to provide public notice of an open seat election via an Internet posting on their website. If the office of record does not have a website, they must provide a posting in three public areas, similar to current open meetings law requirements.

This notice would increase public awareness of an open seat that might otherwise go unnoticed. In addition, many individuals might be interested in public service, while also not wanting to run against an incumbent. With a public notice of an open seat, those individuals will have the chance to reevaluate their desire to run in light of an incumbent leaving office.

Assembly Bill 834 will boost public awareness of open seat elections at the local and county level, allowing for people to engage in our system of government in ways they otherwise might not.

Thank you again for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 834 and allowing me to testify in favor of it. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



Office of the County Clerk

Ashley Reichert, County Clerk
Mary Schlitt, Chief Deputy Clerk

Tennies Government Center
432 E. Washington Street
P.O. Box 1986
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(262) 306-4301

Noncandidacy public notice

Public Affairs Coordinator Ethan Hollenberger | February 11, 2020

Thank you Chairman Tusler for hearing this bill today. Washington County strongly supports the intent for this legislation. We support the bill as changed by the substitute amendment.

We agree a change to state law is worthy to boost public awareness of open seats. Wisconsin's non-partisan spring elections are typically unfollowed, uncontested, and inspire little turnout. What's more, recruiting candidates becomes a challenge. In Washington County's 26 supervisory districts, three are contested. Two are open seats. Seven open seats are uncontested.

Washington County posts an "Information for Candidates" section on the County Clerk's website. A candidate tracking document is posted so that the public and press may know who is running. The Wisconsin Elections Commission also has candidate tracking, and not just for noncandidacy. Both the *Washington County Daily News* and *Washington County Insider* published stories on who was running for office based on this publicly available information.

Coincidentally, the day after this bill circulated a member of our board asked me why he could not find out who was running for city council on the city's website. He and others have commented on the usability and openness of our candidate tracking. This is why we believe the bill could go further and require all clerks to post candidate tracking. In addition to Washington County, the Wisconsin Election's Commission and others already do this.

While we support a more robust requirement, this bill is a great first start. Polling data suggests, citizens believe their representatives are doing a great job even when they believe the governmental body has a low approval rating. Knowing an incumbent is not running for reelection is crucial to recruit candidates as a replacement.

We thank the authors' willingness to amend the proposal based on our concerns. The amendment clears up ambiguous language and removes the class 1 newspaper notice. Generally, there are better ways to notify the public than newspaper notices. As I mentioned before, media outlets were covering noncandidacy announcements days in advance when a newspaper notice could have been published.

Thank you for your time and we hope you move forward with this bill late in the session.

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD SUPERVISOR CANDIDATES - April 7, 2020 Election

As of: 1/7/2020

		Name	Mailing Address	Municipality of Residence	Contact Phone (262)	Date Camp. Reg. Statement Received (CF-1)	Date Declaration of Candidacy Received	Date Nomination Papers Received	No. of Valid Signatures** (Min. 50)	Date Notification of Non-candidacy Received*	Ballot Placement
District	1	Kristine Deiss	1523 Quietwood Lane	West Bend WI 53090	City of West Bend	323-1542	11/26/19	11/26/19	12/20/19	56	
District	2	Roger Kist	3305 Dubin Circle	West Bend WI 53090	City of West Bend	(414) 550-2755				11/1/19	
		Joseph R. Vespalec	1926 Park Avenue	West Bend WI 53090	City of West Bend	794-2942	11/18/19	11/18/19	12/16/19	50	
District	3	Christopher Bossert	607 S. 18th Avenue	West Bend WI 53095	City of West Bend	627-0677	11/8/19	11/8/19	12/20/19	64	
District	4	Chris Jenkins	2610 Eagles Court	West Bend WI 53095	City of West Bend	707-3959				11/6/2019	
		Linda L. Gurath	1807 Cloverview Street	West Bend WI 53095	City of West Bend	(920) 627-5932	11/25/19	11/25/19	12/9/19	60	
District	5	Michael Bassill	186 River Road	West Bend WI 53095	City of West Bend	(414) 378-3647				11/13/19	
		Randy J. Marquardt	625 S. Indiana Avenue	West Bend WI 53095	City of West Bend	334-2934	11/20/19	11/20/19	12/23/19	63	
District	6	Denis Kelling	2306 Wellington Drive	West Bend WI 53090	City of West Bend	305-2678	11/14/19	11/14/19	12/11/19	62	
District	7	John F. Schodron	6059 STH 144	West Bend WI 53095	Town of West Bend	224-0664	11/19/19	11/19/19	12/26/19	75	
		Frank Carr	3492 Paradise Drive	West Bend WI 53095	Town of West Bend	(414) 526-6030				12/26/2019	
District	8	Brian Krebs	6081 Hilldale Drive	Hartford WI 53027	Town of Hartford	305-5224	12/26/19	12/26/19	12/26/19	56	

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD SUPERVISOR CANDIDATES - April 7, 2020 Election

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District	9	Richard Bertram	2428 Salisbury Road N	West Bend WI 50390	Town of Barton	355-5111					11/11/19	
		Kara C. Guse	6805 Old Apple Lane	West Bend WI 53090	Town of Barton	305-4072	11/25/19	11/25/19	12/20/19	55		
District	10	William Symicek	219 Main Street	Kewaskum WI 53040	Village of Kewaskum	622-3385	12/2/19	12/2/19	1/7/20	56		
District	11	Keith Stephan	8195 Indian Lore Road	Kewaskum WI 53040	Town of Farmington	483-4108	11/15/19	11/14/19	12/17/19	80		
		Doug Neumann	9230 Bolton Drive	Kewaskum WI 53040	Town of Farmington	689-1926	12/10/19	12/10/19	12/10/19	68		
District	12	Joseph Gonnering	878 Riverview Drive	West Bend WI 53095	Town of Trenton	689-5345	12/19/19	12/19/19	12/19/19	55		
District	13	Robert Hartwig	3551 Country Aire Drive	Cedarburg WI 53012	Town of Jackson	(414) 313-7514	12/30/19	12/11/19	12/30/19	97		
District	14	Marcella C. Bishop	1736 Mill Road	Jackson WI 53037	Town of Jackson	677-2662	12/26/19	12/26/19	1/6/20	67		
District	15	Marilyn Merten	2641 Mayfield Road	Richfield WI 53076	Town of Polk	677-2597					12/3/19	
		Rodney C. Bartlow	2780 County Road CC	Slinger WI 53086	Town of Polk		1/6/20	12/20/19	1/6/20	67		
		Pamela W. Konrath	4704 Lakeview Circle	Slinger WI 53086	Town of Polk	262-224-6353	1/6/20	1/6/20	1/6/20	83		
District	16	Russell Brandt	421 Hill View Drive	Slinger WI 53086	Village of Slinger						11/15/19	
		Lois A. Krueger-Gundrum	301 Winter Lane	Slinger WI 53086	Village of Slinger	644-7002	11/19/19	11/19/19	12/11/19	72		



DUEY STROEBEL

STATE SENATOR • 20TH DISTRICT

Testimony on Assembly Bill 834

Thank you Chairman Tusler and members of the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 834. The bill represents a common sense, good government reform designed to improve public awareness and encourage citizen participation in local government. My testimony will be directed toward the substitute amendment that was introduced last week.

Under current law, an incumbent local elected official who seeks reelection is required to file a declaration of candidacy with the office of record (i.e., the local clerk's office) within a specified timeframe. On the other hand, an incumbent local elected official who *does not* plan to seek reelection is supposed to file a notification of non-candidacy with the local clerk's office within a specified timeframe. Under both scenarios, there is no requirement for the local clerk's office to provide public notice of the opening of a seat for a local governing body.

AB 834 seeks to improve public awareness of open seat elections at the local level by requiring the local clerk's office to provide public notice of non-candidacy filings in accordance with the state's legal notice law.

Wisconsin's spring local government elections usually feature lower turnout and less media coverage on the candidates who are vying for open seats compared to their fall equivalents. This reality makes it all the more imperative that we advance sensible reforms to improve public knowledge and provide opportunities for citizens to engage with our system of government. AB 834 is one such reform.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I would welcome any questions from the committee.



Testimony of Matt Rothschild

Executive Director, Wisconsin Democracy Campaign

Before the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

Feb. 11, 2020

Good morning, Chair Tusler and other Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I'm Matt Rothschild, the executive director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, now celebrating our 25th year for clean and open government and advocating for a democracy where everyone has an equal voice.

I got no problem with AB 834. It seems innocuous and straightforward enough.

What I got a problem with is, when's the hearing on more important bills dealing with our campaigns and elections?

Since this is likely the last time you'll be meeting to take citizen input this session, let me just ask, briefly, a few questions.

When's the hearing on AB 303, introduced by Rep. Vining and Sen. Hansen, to ban gerrymandering in Wisconsin?

50 County Boards have passed resolutions urging you to adopt something like this. And the Marquette Law School poll shows 72 percent of Wisconsinites in favor of nonpartisan redistricting, including 63 percent of Republicans and 76 percent of Independents. This bill has 5 Republican co-sponsors, which is 4 more than ever before.

So when's the hearing?

When's the hearing on AJR 11, introduced by Rep. Subeck and Sen. Hansen, which would give all the citizens of Wisconsin an opportunity to weigh in on whether the U.S. Constitution should be amended to proclaim, once and for all, that corporations aren't persons and money isn't speech? In 146 Wisconsin communities, resolutions or referendums have been passed in favor of such an amendment.

So when's the hearing?

When's the hearing on AB 309, introduced by Rep. Crowley and Sen. Hansen, to give us *Automatic Voter Registration*, like 18 other states have?

When's the hearing on AB 400, introduced by Rep. Crowley and Sen. Taylor, to ban prison gerrymandering, as California, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Nevada, and Washington all have done?

When's the hearing on AB 477, introduced by Rep. Emerson and Sen. Taylor, to reenfranchise the formerly incarcerated, as Florida has done?

When's the hearing on AB 732, introduced by Rep. Spreitzer and Sen. Miller, to allow for ranked-choice voting in Wisconsin, as Maine has adopted?

All of these bills are much more urgently needed than this minor bill that you're taking up today.

So when's the hearing?