

**STATE SENATOR KATHY BERNIER**  
TWENTY-THIRD SENATE DISTRICT



State Capitol • P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707  
Office: (608) 266-7511 • Toll Free: (888) 437-9436  
Sen.Bernier@legis.wi.gov • www.SenatorBernier.com

**From: Senator Kathy Bernier**

**To: The Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics**

**Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 102**

**Relating to:** allowing a pupil enrolled in a home-based private educational program to serve as an election inspector.

**Date: March 11, 2021**

Thank you committee members for allowing me to provide testimony on Senate Bills 102. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Rep. Jesse James on this simple but important legislation.

This bill stems from a constituent contacting our offices to point out a situation where state elections statutes have not kept up with present educational practices. Currently, private, public, and tribal school students who are 16 or 17 years of age with a 3.0 grade point average or higher may serve as an election inspector. Unfortunately homeschooled students may not. This legislation would allow homeschooled students to engage in the democratic process and legally volunteer as election inspectors.

This bill is identical to legislation introduced last session which had bi-partisan co-authors, passed this committee unanimously, passed the Assembly on a voice vote, and only failed to pass in the Senate due to the pandemic. Which is why I ask you to please support the passage of Senate Bill 102. Thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony today.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

**JESSE JAMES**

Testimony before Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics  
Senate Bill 102  
Thursday, March 11, 2021

Thank you Chairwoman Bernier and committee members for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 102, and giving me the opportunity to testify today. This legislation makes an easy fix to allow home-schooled students the same rights as public, private, and tribal students when it comes to serving as an election inspector. Election inspectors are so important to the election process in Wisconsin.

Currently, Wisconsin high school students who attend public, private, or tribal schools can work as an election inspector. They must be 16 or 17 years old, maintain a 3.0 grade point average, or meet other requirements put together by their school. If the student can meet all of these requirements and get permission from their parents and school administrator they can be appointed to serve as an election inspector.

SB 102 would add homeschooled students to the list of students who are able to participate as an election inspector.

This bill is a simple fix to allow homeschooled students the same privileges as public, private and tribal students. It just makes sense to get more young people involved in the democratic process at a time when there is a need for more election inspectors

I want to thank Senator Bernier for working on this with me.

Chairwoman Bernier, and Members of the Committee,

Thank You for the hearing on the proposed bill before you - one that allows Home school students to work the polls.

I could not be there in person today, but I do want to share with you my testimony on why I asked for this bill to be created, and voted into law.

I have been involved in elections for over two decades. During that time, I have worked the polls in numerous wards throughout Eau Claire; and witnessed firsthand, the shortages of poll workers esp. those that are young in age.

Due to this, I got involved and signed up, literally, hundreds of people to be poll workers.

I have also done this state-wide through an organization, for a decade.

One of my goals is to get young adults to work the polls, and high school students who meet the requirements.

I have read our election laws dozens of times each year, to ensure we were in compliance with our state statutes.

**To my utter shock, one *key group* of high school students, were completely excluded from being allowed to work the polls during our elections, per our state statutes.**

**That group is - Home Schooled Students.**

I recently discussed with a Clerk, about having homeschooled students work the polls. Her answer to me was - no they cannot. Their election office called the Wisconsin Election Commission to confirm that, and they said no, Home Schoolers are NOT allowed to work the polls!

The Stats for the total number of homeschooled students in the State of Wisconsin are not perfect. But from what I could find, the numbers are around thirty thousand, and going up, especially due to Covid- 19. The students eligible to work the polls from that pool, are in the hundreds.

\*All high school students 16 and up, are allowed in the WI. State Statute to work the polls, as long as they have a 3.0 grade point, have permission from their parents, and work out a plan with their Principal, if they do not have a 3.0 GPA.

Private schools, tribal schools, public, everyone *but* home school students, can work the polls legally for a full day. ***All except - Home Schooled students.***

**This is discrimination, against one specific group - Home Schooled students!**

The State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, dictates several things that must be done for homeschoolers. How many hours of instruction they must have, testing, what they must complete to receive a diploma etc. Thus, they are a part of our education

system. Homeschooled students do have to comply with several things, in order for those students to receive an accepted education by the State of Wisconsin.

The conclusion then is - ***Why are they excluded/barred***, from being a paid poll worker like all other 16–18-year-old high school students?

I personally have known and worked with Home-Schooled students for over 2 decades. I have found them to be great students, intellectual, respectful, and highly motivated to serve in many capacities.

**I would like to see this exclusion of Homeschoolers not being allowed to work the polls, rectified in the state statute, with this bill, #94.**

This is why I believe this bill is good for the State of Wisconsin:

- Most areas of our state do not have enough poll workers.
- Clerks are desperate in many areas to fill those slots.
- In Presidential election years - the turnout is massive, we need a large pool of poll workers to choose from, and to work those long elections.
- Our Poll worker pool is *aging rapidly in Wisconsin*. We must take that seriously and find replacements!
- **Younger** poll workers are desperately needed. They have more stamina for the long day, can work the *electronic voting machines* - and figure them out easily! They learn quickly too!
- More poll workers are needed that are **younger**, for the *in-person-absentee ballot voting*. There are not enough, if any, at those sites.
- Students who start working the polls in their teens, will hopefully develop a decades-long commitment to work the polls. This helps our municipalities to grow a pool of *consistent* workers who are trained, and then work for years, possibly becoming Chief Inspectors in the future.
- Many students that are home schooled have a more flexible schedule, and are able to be at the polls without interfering with sports, and other extra-curricular activities. They can work the polls longer, and most likely the entire Election Day. (Child labor laws are waived in our state for working the polls.)
- Homeschooled students, may have the advantage of bringing a parent, who also signs up to work the polls with them, which greatly increases the poll worker pool.
- Homeschooled students receive many hours of civics, government, social studies courses, due to their time schedule, thus are *well prepared for participating* in their community as an election official.
- Homeschooled students are very serious about civics, government, and elections, this is a natural place for them to continue that education, by participating in conducting elections at the polls.
- Teenagers should be poll workers, so they observe first hand, how the election process operates. Also, the seriousness, preparation, hard work, and many details that go into

our elections. This makes them better citizens, and most likely, committed voters in the future.

We want young people to care about voting, elections and to know the process. Homeschool students are just as worthy as all other teens, to participate in working the polls. They will be a great addition to our State, municipalities, and will greatly increase our workforce for election days! This is a win for them, their clerks, and their polling locations in their communities!

Thank You for your consideration of this much needed bill!

Sincerely,  
Laurie Forcier - Eau Claire Wisconsin