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From: Senator Kathy Bernier
To: The Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 297
Relating to: terms of office for local government officers.
Date: May 5, 2021

Thank you committee members for allowing me to provide testimony on Senate Bills 297. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Rep. Donna Rozar on this simple but important legislation.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many issues were brought to light impacting county government. One substantial issue was, if the spring election had been postponed, county supervisor's terms would expire, leaving counties with no legislative body.

Currently, county supervisors are elected to 2-year terms beginning on the 3rd Monday in April for Milwaukee County, and 3rd Tuesday in April for all other counties. If a spring election in an even-numbered year were postponed, terms would expire and counties would be left without board members. For counties, this means they would be unable to carry out the functions of county government as there would be no elected and seated county supervisors.

There is a pending amendment to the bill which corrects an issue when the bill was circulated and removes municipal elected officials at the request of the League of Municipalities.

Finally, to reiterate, this legislation amends current Wisconsin State Statute to allow the terms of county supervisors and town board members to extend until a successor is elected and qualified. I ask you to please support the passage of Senate Bill 297. Thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony today.



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May 5, 2021

Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics

RE: Representative Rozar Testimony on SB 297 – Relating to terms of office for local government officers.

Good morning, members of the Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics. I appreciate the opportunity to testify alongside Senator Bernier in favor of SB 297.

This is a simple piece of legislation that will provide a safety-net, should anything happen that causes a county board election to be postponed.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many issues were brought to light impacting county government. One substantial issue was, if the spring election in 2020 had been postponed, county board supervisor's terms would have expired, leaving counties with no legislative body.

In some cases, the county board Chair serves as the County Administrator, which constitutes the executive branch of county government.

Currently, county board supervisors are elected to 2-year terms beginning the 3rd Monday in April for Milwaukee County, the 3rd Tuesday in April for all other counties. If a county board election were postponed, terms would expire and counties would be left without a governing body. For counties, this means they would be unable to carry out the functions of county government, as there would be no elected and seated county board supervisors.

This legislation will amend current Wisconsin State Statute to allow the terms of county board supervisors to extend until a successor is elected and certified, ensuring counties maintain their legislative body, and in some cases, the executive branch of county government.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics

FROM: Marcie Rainbolt, Government Affairs Associate

DATE: May 5, 2021

SUBJECT: Support Senate Bill 297: Terms of Office for Local Government Officers

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were many issues brought to light impacting county government. One substantial issue involved whether the spring election would be delayed or continue as scheduled. While the election was ultimately held on April 7, 2020, a delay in the election would have resulted in the absence of elected county board supervisors.

According to Wis. Stats. § 59.10(3)(d): Supervisors are county officers, shall be elected for 2-year terms at the election to be held on the first Tuesday in April in even-numbered years and shall take office on the 3rd Tuesday in April of that year. Given the “fixed” length of county supervisory terms, if the spring election were postponed, county board members would no longer serve in office on the third Tuesday in April. A delayed election would result in no county supervisors elected in the state and therefore, no legislative body of county government.

Senate Bill (SB) 297 would amend statutes and allow county board supervisors the ability to continue to serve if a future election were to be postponed. The county board supervisors’ term would be extended only until the election could properly take place and a successor was elected and appropriately seated.

The Wisconsin Counties Association, on behalf of its county members, respectfully requests your support of SB 297.