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## ***Testimony on Senate Joint Resolution 32***

*Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs and Constitution and Federalism  
Tuesday, December 14, 2021*

Chairman Wimberger and members,

Thank you for the opportunity to come before your committee today to discuss Senate Joint Resolution 32 – a constitutional amendment that provides only a person who is a qualified elector may vote for a national, state, or local office or at a statewide or local referendum.

There is no doubt voting is an iconic embodiment in American civic life. Other than standing for public office, American citizens have no stronger collective civic obligations than those that flow from their ability and responsibility to help shape community policy. Voting is a primary vehicle for exercising those civic responsibilities. That is why the extension to only the country's qualified citizens has historically been a critical measure of America's progress toward living up to its democratic ideals.

In recent years, a concerted effort has been gathering force to allow non-citizens to the United States to vote without becoming citizens. As a result of these efforts, there are several states and municipalities throughout the country that have attempted to allow non-citizens to vote in local elections. Moreover, legislation to allow non-citizens to vote has been introduced and passed in a number of states and localities including Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and just last week in New York City. These initiatives are concerning as it seeks to dilute the rights of United States citizens by extending the scope of qualified electors to non-citizens and discouraging the naturalization process.

The Wisconsin Constitution provides that every United States citizen is a qualified elector, but does not specify that only a United States citizen are qualified electors. This constitutional amendment seeks to provide clarity that a qualified elector is only a United States citizen for the purpose of all elections and ballot measures in our state. Efforts to clarify constitutional language has already passed in a number of other states, most recently Colorado where it succeeded with 62.9% support statewide.

As we have seen during the last election cycle, our election laws are already complex and by adding more responsibilities to our local election clerks will only lead to more confusion. By allowing non-citizens to vote, each clerk would have to maintain two separate voting logs as well as administering two separate ballots during an election. From a practical standpoint, granting these rights to a state or locality would be more problematic as it could lead to non-citizens accidentally and illegally voting in federal elections. An example of this occurred in

California and Illinois that implemented laws in recent years that automatically registered hundreds of non-citizens to vote due to a technical glitch, ultimately allowing 16 non-citizens in Illinois to cast a ballot because of the confusion.

Our country has always been a nation of immigrants, and we remain today the most welcoming nation in the world. Requiring all of our laws to be compiled with requires no more of a non-citizen than it does of a citizen. The constitutional amendment discussed today will in turn prevent disenfranchisement to legitimate voters, and by addressing this issue now will ensure votes are not diluted in the future.

Chairman Wimberger, again, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the committee on this important legislation. At this time, I'd be happy to answer any questions you or the members of the committee may have.