



TODD NOVAK

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 51ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

DATE: Tuesday, January 9th, 2024
RE: Testimony on Assembly Bill 915
TO: Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate
FROM: State Representative Todd Novak

Thank you Chairman Brooks and members of the Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 915 (AB 915), relating to fees for recording and filing instruments with the registers of deeds; the portion of such fees used for the land information program; and the minimum state grant amounts under the program.

Earlier this session, I was approached by local government officials about a growing financial concern many County Land Information offices are experiencing with the cost to produce and manage land information records.

Over the last 13 years, the geospatial industry has seen tremendous growth in the use and demand of geospatial technology, all while the costs to produce and manage land information have risen through inflation (41% increase) and higher demand. At the same time, Wisconsin Land Information Program (WLIP) revenues are decreasing with real estate recordings at their lowest point in 30 years.

AB 915 address this funding shortfall by increasing general recording and filing fees charged by county Registers of Deeds from \$30 to \$45. Additionally, the bill increases the minimum grant amount the Department of Administration may award to counties for education and training grants under the program, while increasing base budget grants counties are eligible to receive through the WLIP.

The WLIP helps fund the creation and maintenance of foundational data elements: Public Land Survey System (PLSS), tax parcels, aerial imagery, LiDAR, address points, street centerlines, zoning, administrative boundaries, and many more. This data is used for public safety, economic development, emergency management, transportation planning, property ownership and assessment, environmental monitoring, engineering, surveying, and utility mapping.

The WLIP also funds initiatives that make geospatial data widely available, easier to access, and easier to use through web mapping applications, web records application, and open data portals.



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Private industry, non-profits, academia, and all levels of government rely on WLIP supported geospatial data and applications to create greater efficiencies and to enable better decision making.

I am proud of the broad coalition that supports this bill. It is a testament to the importance and need for this bill, particularly for our rural areas whose local governments are often disproportionately impacted by rising costs and limited funding sources.

Thank you for your consideration of AB 915.



JOAN BALLWEG

STATE SENATOR · 14TH SENATE DISTRICT

**Assembly Bill 915: Fees for the Land Information Program
Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate
Testimony of Senator Joan Ballweg
January 9, 2024**

Thank you, Chair Brooks and members of the committee, for hearing this legislation on the Wisconsin Land Information Program (WLIP).

The WLIP provides funding to County Land Information Offices to modernize local land records. This funding comes from the recording fees charged by the Register of Deeds, which is currently a \$30 fee. A portion of the fee (\$8) is retained by the County Land Information office, half (\$15) goes to the county's general fund, and the remaining portion (\$7) is awarded as grants by the Department of Administration (DOA) to fund training and statewide data initiatives through a county's base budget as well as other strategic grants.

Assembly Bill 915 increases the fee to \$45. The bill increases the portion retained by the County Land Information Office and the amount passed through the DOA to \$15 each. The amount sent to the county's general fund remains unchanged. Under the bill, the maximum level of the training and education grant administered by the DOA is also increased from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Additionally, the DOA is not required to award a base budget grant to a county that retains at least \$175,000 in fees under this bill, which is increased from \$100,000.

The fee was last set in 2010. Since then, the geospatial industry has seen tremendous growth in the use and demand of geospatial technology. At the same time, the costs to produce and manage land information have risen through inflation (41% increase) and higher demand. However, WLIP revenues are decreasing with real estate recordings at their lowest point in 30 years. The 30 year average has equaled about 1,274,034 documents recorded each year. However in 2023, there were 770,705 documents recorded.

The WLIP helps fund the creation and maintenance of foundational data elements: Public Land Survey System (PLSS), tax parcels, aerial imagery, LiDAR, address points, street centerlines, zoning, administrative boundaries, and more. This data is used for public safety, economic development, emergency management, transportation planning, property ownership and assessment, environmental monitoring, engineering, surveying, and utility mapping. The WLIP also funds initiatives to make geospatial data widely available, easier to access, and easier to use through web mapping applications, web records application, and open data portals.

The bill is supported by the Wisconsin Land Information Association, Wisconsin Land Title Association, and the Wisconsin Counties Association.

Thank you for your consideration for Assembly Bill 915.



January 9th, 2024

To: Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate
From: Carrie Springer, Dane County Director of Government Affairs
Re: Testimony on AB 915

Chair Brooks and members of the Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate:

Thank you for holding this hearing today. Dane County supports AB 915 and we appreciate the opportunity to provide input on this bill.

Counties are facing increasing demands for the development and maintenance of geospatial data and providing open access to this data. Increasing the document recording fee would provide much needed funding for county land information offices and the Wisconsin Land Information Program (WLIP).

Land information departments in many counties have devoted a lot of resources over the past decade to making sure this data is available to public and making improvements that make the data easier for the public to access online. Software and hardware upgrades to maintain this data can be very costly.

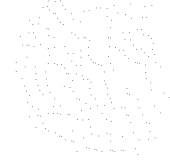
The data maintained by county land information offices across Wisconsin is used by multiple departments in each county including zoning, highway, and of course emergency management. Better data and data that is easy to access helps counties make better decisions. The data from land information departments is also a valuable resource for many businesses in Wisconsin as well. Realtors, utilities, and development companies all rely on the data managed and web applications maintained by county land information offices.

That's why even though Dane County is a donor county generating far more revenue that we get back, our legislative agenda supports all efforts to make sure this program can continue to provide the grants needed around the state to help ensure government, educational institutions, and private businesses can all access the data they need.

The Dane County Land Information Office has experts in this area who can answer any questions committee members may have about this program so please do not hesitate to reach out if you need any additional information. Thank you for your consideration of this bill and our testimony. We encourage you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Carrie Springer
Dane County Government Affairs Director
Springer.carrie@countyofdane.com





To: Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate
From: Cori Lamont, Vice President of Legal and Public Affairs
Date: January 9, 2024
RE: AB 915/SB 872 – Increasing Document Recording Fees

The Wisconsin REALTORS® Association (WRA) opposes AB 915/SB 872 increasing the document recording fee.

Background

The WRA does not question the merits of the land information program. As a matter of fact, the WRA has been a long-time supporter of the land information program. In addition to being a member of the Wisconsin Land Information Council for decades, the WRA actively supported reallocating a \$5 portion of the document recording fee to create a statewide Digital Parcel Map in the 2013-2015 state budget.

However, the WRA does not support increasing the document recording fee and instead encourages the legislature to find alternative methods to fund the land information program. Everyone benefits from the land information program such as emergency services, local units of government, utility companies, GPS services, schools, and tourists to name a few, and yet the land information program is funded by those recording a document on real property.

AB 915/ SB 872

Increases the fee from \$30 to \$45 in the following way:

- Land information office: \$15 (currently \$8)
- Wisconsin Land Information Program: \$15 (currently \$7)
- General fund: no increase (currently \$15)

The legislation does not propose an increase to the county general fund. While a county may choose to use the \$15 to support the land information program in ways of staffing, hardware, software, data development, and maintenance, each county has discretion on how the \$15 collected from the document recording fee is allocated.

Proposed Recommendation

While there may be a variety of alternative revenue sources to support the increase to land information, one option could be to reallocate the \$15 to the general fund to the land information office and the Wisconsin Land Information Program. Redistributing the \$15 placed in the general fund where it can be used for broad county purposes to the land information program, achieves maintaining the current \$30 fee and increasing the funding support for the land information program.

Until sources other than increasing the recording fees are utilized to support the land information program, the WRA opposes AB 915/SB 872.



Staci M. Hoffman

Jefferson County Register of Deeds

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Tuesday, January 9, 2024

Re: **2023 Assembly Bill 915 – Recording Fees in the Register of Deeds Office**

Jefferson County **supports a recording fee of \$45**. The county Register of Deeds is responsible to collect and distribute the recording fees for documents recorded in their office. The fees are split between the county general fund and the Wisconsin Land Information Programs (WLIP) within the state and counties. The county general fund portion will remain at \$15, while both the state and the counties land information programs will be increase to \$15 each.

- The funding for the WLIP comes from the register of deeds real estate document recording fees retained at the county level and grants awarded by DOA.
- All 72 counties participate in the WLIP and will benefit from the new recording fee.
- WLIP plans are intended to enable information to be readily translatable, retrievable, and geographically referenced for use by any federal, state, or local governmental unit or public utility.
- Over the last 13 years, both the public and private sectors have requested more information from the state and county land records and at a quicker speed. The costs to provide the information have increase exponentially.
- Counties with lower number of document recordings are having difficulties fullfilling their statutory duties much less providing the additional information requested from those that utilize the county records.
- There is a formal oversight process for spending WLIP funds as the counties must update their program plans every three years.
- The WLIP funds are segregated and may only to be used for DOA and County approved projects within the plans.

For these reasons, Jefferson County supports a recording fee of \$45. We appreciate your consideration in changes to the recording fees to assist the state and county land programs.



LION

The Wisconsin Land Information Officers
Network

01/08/2024

To: Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate

From: Wisconsin Land Information Officers Network

Re: Support of Document Recording Fees for the WLIP – AB-915

The Wisconsin Land Information Program (WLIP) helps fund the acquisition, creation, maintenance, and access to geospatial data that is used by private industry, non-profit organizations, academia, and all levels of government for property ownership, public safety, emergency management, surveying and engineering, economic development, transportation planning, utility mapping and more. WLIP supported geospatial data and applications provide decision makers with the tools and information needed to save time and resources in business and government.

Examples of WLIP supported geospatial data and applications include:

- Aerial photography
- High accuracy elevation data and contours (LiDAR)
- Improving floodplain maps
- Zoning maps
- Tax parcels
- Address points
- Street Centerlines
- Municipal wards and election boundaries
- Public Land Survey System
- County web mapping sites
- Statewide parcel layer

Each county Land Information Office relies on WLIP funding to meet the growing demand for land information. The costs to acquire, maintain, and provide information have increased 41% since 2010. Assembly Bill 915 would help county Land Information Offices throughout the state offset increased costs and meet the increased demand for geospatial data and applications.

Thank you for your time and consideration. The Wisconsin Land Information Officers Network respectfully requests your support for Assembly Bill 915.

Brett Budrow
Chair LION Board
Brett.Budrow@sccwi.gov
(715)386-4678



Wisconsin County Surveyors Association



January 9, 2024

Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate

Dear Chairperson Brooks and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Wisconsin County Surveyors Association (WCSA), I bring to your attention the upcoming hearing on AB-915, in support of Document Recording Fees for the WLIP on January 9, 2024.

WCSA is associated with the Wisconsin Society of Land Surveyors (WSLS) who is a member of the National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS), the national voice of land surveying professionals throughout the United States. We commend the Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate for holding this hearing on addressing the funding shortfall of the WLIP and support increasing general recording and filing fees charged by county Registers of Deeds from \$30 to \$45. Additionally, the bill would increase the minimum grant amount the Department of Administration may award to counties for education and training grants under the program, while increasing base budget grants counties are eligible to receive through the WLIP.

The WLIP helps fund the creation and maintenance of foundational data elements: Public Land Survey System (PLSS), tax parcels, aerial imagery, LiDAR, address points, street centerlines, zoning, administrative boundaries and many more. This data is used for public safety, economic development, emergency management, transportation planning, property ownership and assessment, environmental monitoring, engineering, surveying, utility mapping and more. The WLIP also funds initiatives that make geospatial data widely available, easier to access, and easier to use through web mapping applications, web records application and open data portals. Private industry, non-profits, academia, and all levels of government rely on WLIP supported geospatial data and applications to create greater efficiencies and to enable better decision making.

Without properly funding land information initiatives, county land information offices will continue to lose staff due to lack of budget. Projects like re-monumentation of the PLSS will be put on hold causing important information from prior PLSS work to be lost due to weathering and construction of new infrastructure. Parcel updates will take longer, causing the online information that the public has come to rely upon to be delayed in being available to the real estate industry. This delay may cause errors in recordings due to misinformation being used by people if they do not realize they are using old data for their recordings. This information is critical and this is also what the County 911 Systems use for base information.

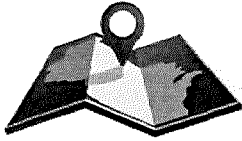
WCSA understands that fee increases do impact those individuals who are recording documents, but we feel this is a needed increase. This is small increase that will have significant benefit to those paying the fee and others.

We recommend enacting this bill as currently drafted, and this hearing is the next necessary step in this process.

Please do not hesitate to contact me whenever I may be of service.

Sincerely,

Ryan L. Duckart - President



January 9, 2024

To: Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate
From: Wisconsin Land Information Association
Re: Support of Document Recording Fees for the WLIP – AB 915

Good morning Chairperson Brooks and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on AB-915.

My name is Nik Anderson, I'm the Chair of the Wisconsin Land Information Association (WLIA) - Legislative Committee and a project manager at Ayres Associates. With me is Fred lausly, member of the WLIA Legislative Committee and Technical Committee, and Senior GIS Analyst with the Dane County Land Information Office. WLIA is a grassroots organization consisting of over 1,000 public and private sector professionals who develop, maintain, distribute, and utilize land information systems and data critical to all sectors of business in Wisconsin.

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AB-915 seeks to address this funding shortfall by increasing general recording and filing fees charged by county Registers of Deeds from \$30 to \$45. Additionally, the bill would increase the minimum grant amount the Department of Administration may award to counties for education and training grants under the program, while increasing base budget grants counties are eligible to receive through the WLIP.

The potential impacts of failing to properly fund land information initiatives include:

- Less timely parcel updates, which negatively impacts the real estate industry and home buying process
- Public Land Survey System re-monumentation projects put on hold



**WISCONSIN
LAND INFORMATION
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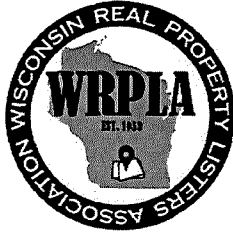
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WLIA understands that fee increases do impact those who record documents, and we don't take this lightly. The WLIA Legislative Committee did a great deal of work to identify and justify the needed increase in working with the bill authors. This small increase will have significant benefits to citizens and businesses alike.

The Document Recording Fee is a significant part of Wisconsin's land information success story, but after 13 years, like all good programs, the WLIP needs an update to keep up with the increasing demand and rising cost of geospatial data. One of the positive aspects of the increased fee and the program it supports, is it's a segregated fee that directly impacts the program we have been speaking about and there is substantial reporting that is done as to how the funds have been spent. Public and private partners alike, can rest assured knowing that this funding is going towards land information related activities that further support and have a compounding impact on Wisconsin's economy, business, and government.

The WLIA would respectfully ask for your support of AB-915, to provide needed funding that the WLIP and county LIO's need to build on the great work that is being done in the State of Wisconsin.

Thank you for your time today, and your consideration of this important legislation. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



Wisconsin Real Property Listers Association

www.wrpla.org
webmaster@wrpla.org

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on State Affairs
FROM: Nicole Hoepfner, Wisconsin Real Property Listers Association President
DATE: January 8, 2024
SUBJECT: Assembly Bill 915: Fees for Recording and filing instruments with the registers of deeds

The Wisconsin Real Property Listers Association appreciate the opportunity to comment on Assembly Bill 915. As custodians of a significant part of Wisconsin's land information, the Wisconsin Real Property Listers have an interest in ensuring long term support and funding for the efforts of the Land Information Program and therefore are in favor of the proposed increase for recording instruments with the Registers of Deeds. The funds retained by Counties will be fundamental to providing continuing support and maintenance of property ownership and assessment data. It will also help Counties keep up with the high demand for access to better geographic data – such as orthoimagery and tax parcel information – that is critical to maintaining land records datasets.

Thank you for your consideration of support of AB 915 so we can enhance our land records and continue providing the best service to geographic data consumers.

Nicole Hoepfner
Wisconsin Real Property Listers Association President
nhoepfner@co.dodge.wi.us
(920) 386-3772



LION

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Network

01/08/2024

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