



STATE SENATOR

Eric Wimberger

DISTRICT 30

Testimony on Senate Bill 283

Re: broadcasting election night proceedings

Senate Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections and Consumer Protection

August 29th, 2023

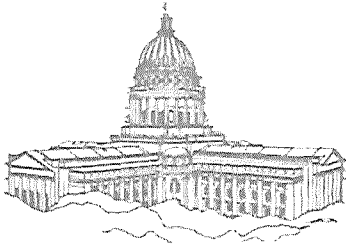
Thank you Chairman Knodl and committee members for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 283, a bill to bolster confidence in our elections through increased transparency.

A growing number of municipalities have, in recent years, chosen to broadcast their vote count and canvass proceedings live over the internet, including Milwaukee, Green Bay, Madison and others. These broadcasts are an optional public service that allow for citizens to see a part of our democracy that they might otherwise miss. However, these broadcasts are not always recorded or maintained as public records.

Senate Bill 283 would require any municipality that broadcasts its canvassing procedures to record that broadcast and treat it as a public record, maintaining it for 22 months. This simple change will help increase transparency and bolster confidence in our elections by ensuring any broadcasts of election proceedings remain available to the public.

Thank you for time today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

**Senate Shared Revenue, Elections and Consumer Protection
SB 283 Testimony of Senator Lena C. Taylor
8/29/2023**

Chairman Knodl, Vice Chairman Feyen and members of the Senate Shared Revenue, Elections and Consumer Protection, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on Senate Bill 283, relating to broadcasting election night proceedings.

On election night, candidates, voters, and political observers are glued to television sets, social media websites, and mobile apps, watching the election results roll in. Following the ticker tape along the bottom, everyone is looking for the percentage of precincts reporting and the tally of ballots counted at that time.

Municipalities may also broadcast election canvassing proceedings live by live stream on the Internet.

As both a candidate and incumbent, I have watched those broadcasts. Eerily, in my own run for local office, I noticed inconsistencies in what appeared on television broadcasts. For example, I watched my own results go from 0% reporting to 100%. Literally, for the entire time results were displaying across the television in every other local race, reporting in the office I was seeking stayed at 0%.

In recent elections, there were reported inconsistencies of broadcast information on the same station, outlet or network. Voters have reached out to question broadcast reporting and expressed some concern about this reliability of this form of election reporting.

In a new survey from MIT Election Data + Science Lab, a non-partisan research group, they found that 69% of registered voters said they were either very or somewhat confident that votes at a nationwide level were counted as intended, a prominent measure of voter trust in election integrity.

Locally, there has been no evidence of widespread fraud in Wisconsin. The 2020 election outcome withstood two partial recounts, a nonpartisan audit, and more. Yet in this heightened and frankly hyper-partisan season, distrust of elections continue to be an issue. We need to take every precaution to increase voter confidence.

SB 283 is an easy way to assuage questions about one forms of broadcast election information. By requiring municipalities that offer this option to record the broadcast, and the municipal clerk to retain the recording for 22 months, we are providing an additional layer of accountability and transparency for our elections. I encourage your support of SB 283.



SHAE SORTWELL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 2nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Hearing Testimony
Senate Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections, and Consumer Protection
August 29, 2023
Senate Bill 283

Chairman Knodl and members of the Shared Revenue, Elections, and Consumer Protection Committee – thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on SB 283, relating to broadcasting election night proceedings.

We can all agree that having free and fair elections is integral to the freedom of our republic. To better achieve that end, there is room for reform of our election laws, including this simple, common-sense, and bipartisan piece of legislation.

Under current law, a municipality is not required to keep a video record of canvassing proceedings in any election that is live-streamed. To ensure and maintain election integrity and accountability, this bill will require that broadcast to be kept as a record and retained for 22 months.

If a municipality livestreams on a third-party site, such as Youtube, they are allowed to archive the record on the third-party site as a way to retain it. This provision was added as an update to the bill from last session to address concerns from the governor.

Under this bill, the public will have another mechanism to verify that a part of our election process is conducted fairly. Municipalities will also be able to have another way to show proof that no corruption occurred during an election.

This legislation received a bipartisan vote in the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections. An amendment that was drafted for the Assembly version simply adds counties and election commissions to the purview of this bill.

I want to thank the committee for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions members of the committee may have.