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## CORY TOMCZYK

STATE SENATOR • 29<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

### SB 126

Senate Committee on Government Operations, Labor, and Economic Development  
Wednesday, April 16, 2025

SB 126 is a trailer bill to 2023 Act 126, which passed unanimously in the Assembly and a vote of 31-1 in the Senate. I was not the author of that legislation last session, but was a cosponsor.

Unfortunately, we were not aware of how much money this change was going to cost and the authors quickly realized that the effective date of July 1, 2025 was going to be unworkable for the Wisconsin Ethics Commission. It soon became clear that legislation was needed to delay the effective date so that the Ethics Commission could follow the law and have enough time to plan for the change. Simply, the Ethics Commission did not have enough time or resources to follow the law and implement Act 126 by July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.

As a result of Act 126 the Ethics Commission needs to acquire new office space, hire and train new full time employees, and other actions to ensure that they can follow the law we passed. By passing SB 126 and delaying the implementation of Act 126 to **December 1, 2027**, the Ethics Commission and the Legislature will be able to work together to analyze the cost of the change in law and ensure that the change is done correctly instead of quickly.

It is important to pass this bill soon to get it to the Governor's desk so that the Ethics Commission is in compliance with state law.

Thank you for your consideration.



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# RICK GUNDRUM

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 58<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Testimony on Senate Bill 126

Senate Committee on Government Operations, Labor, and Economic Development | April 16, 2025 | Room 201 Southeast

Chair Feyen, Vice-Chair Kapenga, and members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, Labor, and Economic Development, thank you for giving Senate Bill 126 a public hearing. I also want to thank Senator Tomczyk for working with me on this legislation. I've spent nearly two decades in local government as a Slinger Village Trustee, Washington County Board Supervisor, and Chairman of the Washington County Board. I've run in many local races and have submitted many local finance reports. I still believe that 2023 Wisconsin Act 126 is good policy, as it helps to better establish transparency and accountability in our local elections process.

Senate Bill 126 is a bill that changes the effective date for all candidates to be under one umbrella. It changes the timeline requirement for when all local candidates have to start submitting their finance reports with CFIS. Last session, when 2023 Senate Bill 822 went through the legislative process and was signed by the governor, it was clear that the bill would come with a price tag – but it was unclear how big of a sticker it would be. It wasn't until the bill became law that we saw just how much money it was going to take for the Ethics Commission to fulfill their requirements under the newly signed law.

To put things into perspective: the Ethics Commission's current budget for the biennium is \$3.6 million which translates to \$1.8 million per year. Following the passage of 2023 Wisconsin Act 126, the Ethics Commission is now requesting a total of \$8.6 million over the 2025-2027 biennium which breaks down to \$4.3 million per year. This is due to the fact that the Commission would need new office space, to hire and train 19 new full time employees, as well as a list of other items to guarantee that they are able to comply with state law.

Because of the eye popping fiscal impact of 2023 Wisconsin Act 126, it is imperative that we delay the July 1, 2025 implementation date. It is my belief that it is important for the Legislature to take time to properly analyze the fiscal element of this new legislation before it goes into effect. The new date for the change to 2023 Wisconsin Act 126 is December 1, 2027.

I want to thank all my colleagues that signed on to this bill. I think 2023 Wisconsin Act 126 is still an important and necessary change to our local elections but recognize the funding aspect will take time and deliberation. I am happy to answer your questions.