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Sen. C. 2005  
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January 5, 2005

The Honorable Joe Leibham, Chair  
Legislative Council Special Committee on Election Law Review  
Room 127 South, State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Leibham:

As Chair of the Legislative Council Special Committee on Election Law Review, I write to ask that the committee review an idea to significantly reduce local governments' cost of administering elections, proposed by Eau Claire City Manager Don Norrell in the attached letter.

Under current law, local election officials are required to audit electors registering to vote on election day by mailing out first-class postcards. If a postcard is returned undelivered, the election official must change the voter's status from 'eligible' to 'ineligible' and provide that name to the district attorney. In conducting this activity, communities incur costs for printing and mailing the postcards, followed by administrative time for processing returned cards.

Mr. Norrell suggests that the same result can be accomplished by providing an electronic file of election day registrants to a mailing service that accesses the U.S. Postal Service's address verification database. Since the mailing service uses the same database, it would provide the same information at a fraction of the cost. It is estimated that the current process costs City of Eau Claire taxpayers approximately \$3,000 in postage alone, while the same result could be achieved through a mailing service for approximately \$300.

If a single municipality could save almost \$3,000 dollars, taxpayers statewide could see a significant benefit through this option. I respectfully request that your committee give full consideration to this proposal in the course of its deliberations.

Please feel free to contact my office at (608) 266-8546 if we can provide you with additional information. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Ron Brown in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Ron Brown  
State Senate  
31<sup>st</sup> District

RB:mp

Attachment



**CITY OF EAU CLAIRE**

**DEC 20 2004**

*Office of the City Manager*  
*Phone: (715) 839-4902*  
*Fax: (715) 839-6177*

December 15, 2004

The Honorable Ron Brown  
Wisconsin State Senator  
State of Wisconsin  
PO Box 7882  
Madison WI 53707-7882

Subject: Legislation to update voter verification

Dear Senator Brown,

You have often asked if we were aware of potential legislative changes that would benefit the tax payers. A simple change in Wisconsin Statutes 6.56(3) could save several hundred thousand dollars throughout the state.

Section 6.56(3) requires an audit of all electors registering to vote at the polls by requiring that address verification postcards be sent to them. This procedure is designed to discover anyone who may have falsified his address. Undeliverable postcards are returned to City and are given to the district attorney.

Section 6.56(3) specifically requires that a first class post card be mailed so that the U.S. Post Office's address verification database will identify the faulty addresses.

What is not generally known is that mailing services have access to the same database and can process an electronic file against the database for thousands of dollars less than the cost of postage. The same audit is performed, the same information obtained, but in a more efficient manner and at a significant cost savings.

Under the present statute, Eau Claire must mail out approximately 10,000 postcards costing the taxpayers approximately \$3,000. We have the ability to provide an electronic file to a mail processor who will verify the addresses using the U.S. Post Office's National Change of Address (NCOA) system at a cost of under \$300.

We have asked the State Election Board if we may substitute the electronic file for the postcards. The Election Board denied the City's request, citing the statutory requirement.

The following change to 6.56(3) would permit the substitution of the electronic file for the postcards.

(3) Upon receipt of the list under sub. (1) the municipal clerk or board of election commissioners shall make an audit of all electors registering to vote at the polling place or other registration location under s. 6.55(2) and all electors registering by agent on election day under s. 6.86(3)(a)2. The audit shall be made by 1<sup>st</sup> class postcard *or by electronic verification using databases generated by the United States Post Office*. Postcards shall be labeled "ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED" or "DO NOT FORWARD - RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED". If any postcard is returned undelivered, or if the clerk or board of election commissioners is informed *by the electronic verification or other means* of a different address than the one specified by the elector which was apparently improper on the day of the election, the clerk or board shall remove the elector's name from the registration list, mail the elector a notice of the removal and provide the name to the district attorney for the county where the polling place is located.

If the proposed legislative change to allow electronic verification will save the City of Eau Claire about \$3,000 just in postage alone, you can project that the statewide taxpayer savings could be several hundred thousand dollars.

Thank you for your consideration of changes to the verification process. There are other similar legislative changes to the election statutes that could generate more cost savings. We would be happy to work with you and the State Elections Board to draft the enabling legislation. We appreciate your assistance with our efforts to use new technologies to find efficiencies and cost savings for our citizens.

Sincerely,



Don T. Norrell  
City Manager