



State Senator Sheila Harsdorf

DEC 15 2004

December 15, 2004

Senator Joe Leibham
Chair, Legislative Council Study Committee on Election Law
Room 127 South

Dear Senator Leibham:

In response to input I have received from a municipal clerk in my district, I would like to request that the Legislative Council Study Committee on Election Law review and consider legislation that would reinstate the requirement that voters provide a reason for obtaining an absentee ballot.

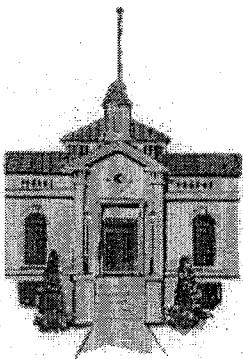
I have enclosed correspondence from the Hudson City Clerk that outlines the specific problems for your review, as well as a resolution that was passed by the Hudson City Council expressing their support for such a change.

Thank you for your attention to this important request. Please feel free to contact me should you have further questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Sheila Harsdorf
State Senator
10th Senate District

Enclosure
SH/mw



City of Hudson

505 Third Street
Hudson, Wisconsin 54016-1694

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December 10, 2004

Devin J. Willi, C.P.A.
City Administrator
(715) 386-4765

Patricia A. Dotseth, C.M.C.
City Clerk

Betty J. Caruso
Finance Officer

Honorable Sheila E. Harsdorf
Wisconsin State Senate
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Harsdorf:

Following the onslaught of absentee voters at the November 2nd General Election, I and other clerks across the state became extremely concerned about the changes that took place regarding absentee voters. Formerly, when the State of Wisconsin required that voters provide a reason to obtain an absentee ballot, we experienced very few problems regarding absentee voting.

Because of the news frenzy that drove people who normally would have come to the polls to seek an absentee ballot, we were engulfed in an enormous increase in absentee voter requests. The large amount of registrations placed a great strain on our office staff, as well as other Clerk's offices across the state. On Election Day, the City of Hudson did not experience long lines of voters waiting to cast their ballot; certainly able-bodied voters could have come to the polls.

The increase in absentee voting made it a horrendous task to service the voters and update all the records in time for the election. In addition to placing a burden on the election inspectors who processed the absentee ballots the night of the election, it also presented the opportunity for more mistakes. Our annual Election Budget was demolished due to extra labor and costs for postage and other absentee voting supplies.

A fellow member of the Wisconsin Municipal Clerk's Association forwarded a sample resolution to me, and I requested that it be placed on the Council agenda for consideration. At the December 6, 2004 meeting, the Common Council adopted Resolution No. 15-04 petitioning the State of Wisconsin Legislature to amend the absentee voting laws and reinstate the law requiring a valid reason for requesting an absentee ballot (copy enclosed). The Council shares my concerns for the higher costs to the City caused by voters using the system merely for the sake of convenience, the extra burden placed on the election inspectors, and increased staff time.

The Council and I ask that you hear our concerns and address this matter with the Wisconsin State Senate. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia A. Dotseth,
City Clerk

PAD/jmd
Enclosure
Cc: State Election Board



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RESOLUTION NO. 15-04

PETITIONING STATE LEGISLATURE TO AMEND ABSENTEE VOTING LAWS

WHEREAS, the absentee voting process was originally designed to enable elderly and disabled voters, and people who were going to be absent from the City on Election Day, an alternate means to cast their ballot; and

WHEREAS, due to changes in the law, any voter may now request an absentee ballot be mailed to their home, or vote early in the City Clerk's office without having to give a reason; and

WHEREAS, various political parties and special interest groups are encouraging electors to vote by absentee ballot merely for the sake of convenience; and

WHEREAS, postage costs alone were \$.97 per absentee ballot, plus the costs of envelopes and the labor involved, not to mention the extra burden placed on the pollworkers at the end of the Election Day.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Common Council of the City of Hudson, Wisconsin, that the City of Hudson hereby petitions the State of Wisconsin Legislature to reinstate the law requiring a valid reason for requesting an absentee ballot, and authorize appropriate penalties for persons requesting absentee ballots when there are no obstacles preventing them from casting their votes at the appropriate polling place on Election Day.

Dated at Hudson, Wisconsin this 6th day of December, 2004.

APPROVED:


John D. Breault, Mayor

ATTEST:


Patricia A. Dotseth, City Clerk