

WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

2001-02

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on
Campaigns &
Elections
(AC-CE)

File Naming Example:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01a
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01b
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt02

Published Documents

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH (Public Hearing Announcements)

➤ **

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ **

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

➤ **

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

➤ **

*Information Collected For Or
Against Proposal*

➤ Appointments ... Appt

➤ **

➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

**

➤ Hearing Records ... HR (bills and resolutions)

➤ **01hr_ab0259_AC-CE_pt01**

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ **

Vote Record

Assembly - Committee on Campaigns and Elections

Date: 9/27/01
 Moved by: Ladwig Seconded by: Fitzgerald
 AB: 259 SB: _____
 Clearinghouse Rule: _____
 Appointment: _____
 AR: _____ SR: _____
 Other: _____

A/S Amdt: _____
 A/S Amdt: _____ to A/S Amdt: _____
 A/S Sub Amdt: _____
 A/S Amdt: _____ to A/S Sub Amdt: _____
 A/S Amdt: _____ to A/S Amdt: _____ to A/S Sub Amdt: _____

Be recommended for:

- Passage
- Introduction
- Adoption
- Rejection

- Indefinite Postponement
- Tabling
- Concurrence
- Nonconcurrence
- Confirmation

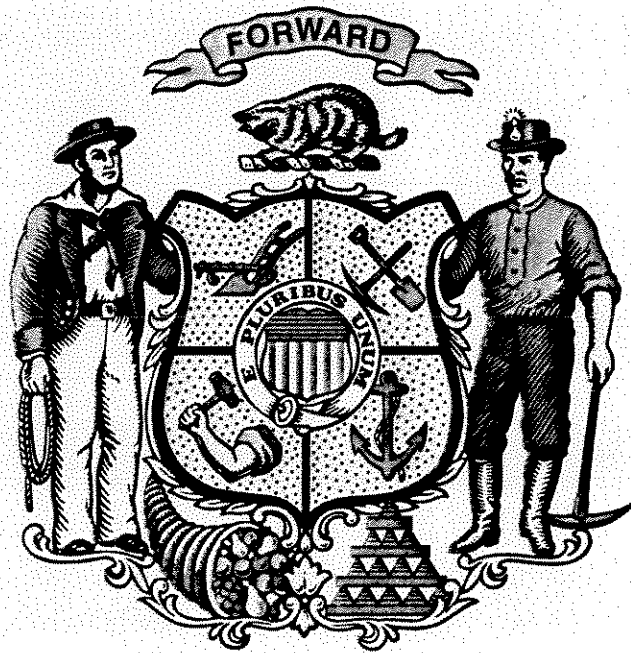
Committee Member

Rep. Stephen Freese, Chair
 Rep. Bonnie Ladwig
 Rep. Jeff Stone
 Rep. Jeff Fitzgerald
 Rep. David Travis
 Rep. Mark Pocan

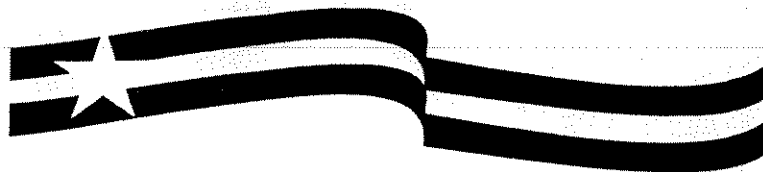
	<u>Aye</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Not Voting</u>
Rep. Stephen Freese, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Bonnie Ladwig	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Jeff Stone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Jeff Fitzgerald	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. David Travis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Mark Pocan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Totals: 4 2 _____ _____

Motion Carried Motion Failed



WISCONSIN CITIZEN ACTION



opeiu9/jlo

152 West Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 308 • Milwaukee, WI 53203 • 414/272-2562 • 414/274-3494 (fax) •
info@wi-citizenaction.org • www.wi-citizenaction.org

Testimony Before the Assembly Campaigns & Elections Committee

Hearing

September 13, 2001

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today at this important hearing. My name is Larry Marx and I'm Co-Executive Director of Wisconsin Citizen Action, the state's largest public interest organization. We have over 60,000 members statewide and 250-dues-paying affiliate organizations from labor, community, senior citizen, faith, environmental, family farm and other organizations. Our interest in voter participation comes out of our recent experience with a non-partisan get-out-the-vote effort we conducted in the Latino community in Milwaukee, traditionally the lowest turnout area in the entire city. We succeeded in raising turnout some 30% in 21 targeted wards, bringing 2,453 brand new voters to the polls. For some it was the first time in their lives that they exercised their franchise and it was an incredibly moving and exciting experience to see them take their .

We very much appreciate the interest of the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections in voter reform. We want to emphasize from the start that we applaud your efforts to reduce the opportunity for fraud in Wisconsin elections, but we think it is a false dichotomy to assume that the goals of reducing voter fraud and increasing voter participation are at odds.

Wisconsin has a proud tradition of being a high voter participation state. As you know, Wisconsin ranked third in the nation in voter turnout on November 7th with 66% of eligible voters going to the polls, as compared to 53% nationally. Wisconsin's turnout also marked an 8.6% increase over 1996, the sharpest rise of any state in the nation. In Milwaukee, 2,245,670 people voted, 53% of those eligible to vote and 67% of those pre-registered to vote by October 25th. We believe we need to build on this tradition of increasing voter participation while also reducing the opportunity for fraud.

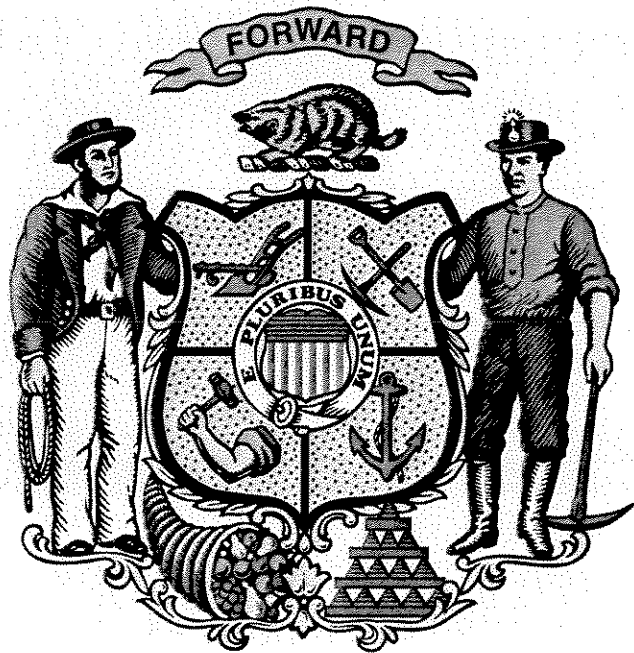
The problem is *not* too many voters having too easy a time of voting -- it's too *few* poll workers having too hard a time of overseeing and processing our elections. This is why we support AB 339 which takes concrete, positive steps to increase the number of trained poll workers on election day.

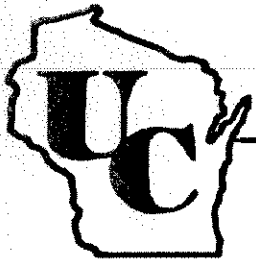
The same factors that open the door to fraud also work to slam the door on increased voter participation. I personally witnessed last November incredibly long lines and more than hour-long waits for people to vote in Milwaukee. We suggest that the committee adopt a standard for its list of reforms that asks "Will it make it both harder to cheat and easier to vote?" Under that standard, we applaud and support AB 339. But AB 259 increases the barriers to voting in the name of fraud reduction. We are opposed to that change in voting procedures because they would roll back the clock and have the effect of reducing turn-out, particularly amongst lower income voters and voters of color who already vote at rates far below the white middle class. We could support AB 373 if it

were amended to require the justice system to inform felons that they can vote once they have completed their sentence, including any parole.

We hope that this committee focuses on ways to maintain Wisconsin's pride of place as one of the nation's traditionally, highest turnout states, behind only Maine and Minnesota in the last presidential election. Retain same day voter registration, and maximal means (personal corroboration, utility bills, no photo ID requirement, etc.) to prove residence status for registration, and maintain ease of voting absentee.

On behalf of our 60,000 members and our coalition of 250 affiliates, we urge this committee to use a standard for reforms of doing finding ways to reduce fraud but increase voter turnout and not forcing us to choose between two important American principles.





United Council

of University of Wisconsin Students, Inc.

122 State Street Suite 500, Madison, WI 53703-2500 Phone (608) 263-3422 Fax (608) 265-4070

Testimony of Craig Trost

United Council of UW Students

Against AB 259

Before the Assembly Campaigns and Elections Committee

Thursday, September 13, 2001

Thank you Representative Freese for allowing me to speak today. My name is Craig Trost. I am the Legislative Affairs Director for United Council of UW Students. United Council is the statewide student association that represents approximately 140,000 students at 23 UW campuses.

I am here today to ask you not to support Assembly Bill 259.

Voting is one of the most important rights Americans have. Our country's history has seen wars and acts of civil disobedience over the right to be free and to elect our representatives. I am here today because I truly feel students will be disenfranchised from the democratic process if this bill passes. Assembly Bill 259 would eliminate vouching, a service used frequently by students. The bill also would require people to provide a valid Wisconsin photo identification card in order to vote. I feel this provision will add an extra step in the voting process, which will negate the positive aspects of same day voter registration in Wisconsin.

Students turned out to vote in record numbers in 2000. Wisconsin ranked third in voter turnout as a percentage of eligible voters during the presidential race, at over 66 percent. I would like every member of this committee to remember those statistics, because if this bill becomes law, those are numbers Wisconsin could never see again.

Before you vote on this bill, I encourage you to look at the diverse situations, which face students across Wisconsin. Many students live on or near campus, thus, do not drive cars. For example, UW-La Crosse just enacted a bus pass system for students to make it easier to get

around campus and town. For this reason, many students rely on their student identification card as their primary form of photo identification, and thus, would not have their driver's license with them to vote. These students would be turned away from the polls and are highly unlikely to return.

Second, the UW System is home to a large number of differently-abled students. These are students who, because of their physical abilities, are precluded from driving cars and rely on the help of others to assist them with their day-to-day functions. Many of these individuals do not have a need for a Wisconsin photo identification card. Furthermore, forcing individuals to wait in line for hours at the Department of Motor Vehicles to obtain an identification card in order to be able to vote is going to cause many to choose not to exercise their right to vote. Many of these individuals cannot just hop into a car and drive to the DMV like you or I could. This bill sets up an additional hurdle for citizens to exercise their rights.

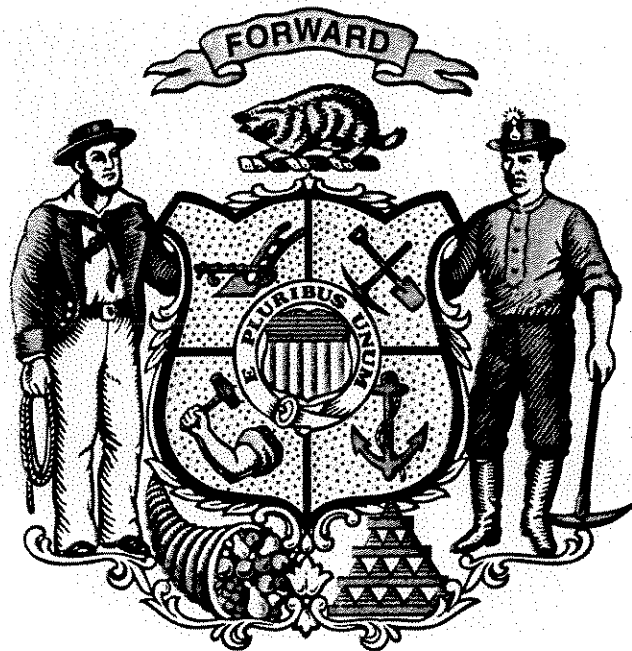
A previous version of this bill included a fee for a Wisconsin identification card. This bill includes no such fee. However, because of a lack of need at college, many students do not bring a certified birth certificate, passport or naturalization papers with them to college, which are documents used in obtaining a Wisconsin photo identification card. Thus, students would have to pay for a copy of one of these items just to receive a "free" identification card.

Finally, the elimination of vouching will dramatically reduce student turnout at the polls. Frequently, at the time of voting, students do not carry a copy of their registered mail with them to vote. The ability of a registered voter to vouch for a fellow student is extremely important in promoting voter turnout and participation in democracy.

The reality of publicizing the new election law is unrealistic. Many students will end up waiting, sometimes for hours, in line to register to vote on Election Day. Then, they could be turned away from the polls and sent to the DMV for a photo ID card. With all due respect to the efficiency of the DMV, the lines on Election Day for photo ID's at the DMV could be staggering. After hours in line at the DMV, students could end up waiting right back in the same line they started from. For college students with classes and families, Election Day could turn into a day of waiting in line. Many students cannot afford that kind of lost time.

The bottom line for students on this issue is simple. Students do not have a lot of money to donate to political campaigns. With tuition skyrocketing at two to three times the rate of inflation, students are forced to work more and have less time to become politically active. Thus, voting is our means to influence every day policies that impact us.

Thank you for your time on this bill. I encourage this committee to vote against AB 259 and to work with the bill's sponsors, who care a great deal about Wisconsin's democracy, to find new ways to make the voting process smoother and increase access to the voting booth.



Mary E. Panzer

Senate Republican Leader



Testimony from Senator Panzer on Assembly Bill 259 – September 13, 2001

I am writing to express my support for Assembly Bill 259. I believe that this legislation and other similar measures are critical to insuring the viability and integrity of our democracy.

Concerns about the sanctity of the ballot box were heightened last fall when the confusion reigned for months before the election results certified that President Bush won the election.

While much of the media attention focused on Florida, electoral irregularities were reported here in Wisconsin. For example:

- A New York based activist was arrested for giving homeless individuals cigarettes in exchange for votes for former Vice President Al Gore.
- A *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* investigation after the election revealed that a number of felons, prohibited by law from voting, had voted in the fall election.

While we may never know the full extent of these irregularities, the public concern and outcry made the need for reform clear.

Our voting system is the foundation of our government. Just as the structural integrity of the foundation is critical to the safety of a building, the integrity of our voting system is critical to the credibility of our representative democracy.

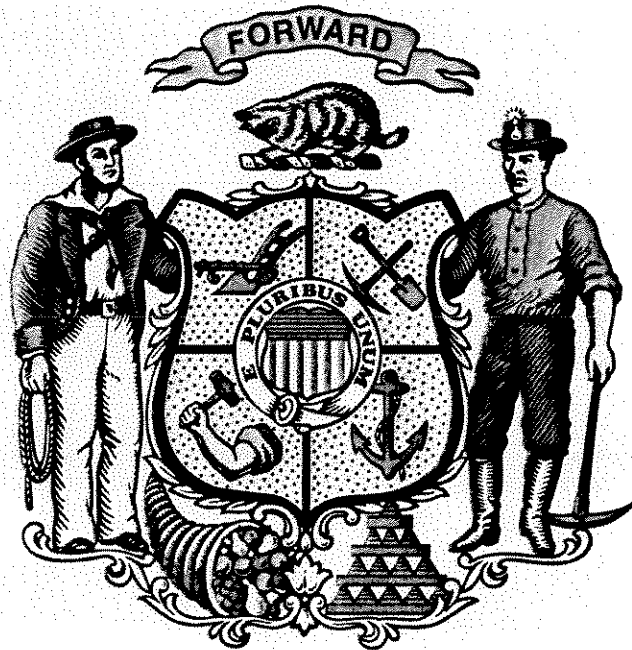
Many reforms have been suggested and the Assembly acted quickly to pass a bill that, if signed into law, would help insure that only qualified electors vote in our elections and that the standard of one person, one vote is upheld. I commend my Assembly colleagues on their efforts in this area. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we have been unable to have these measures scheduled for debate and a vote in the Senate. The bill has been stuck in the Senate since February.

This bill, Assembly Bill 259, would require voters to show a photo id when voting, registering to vote or signing up for an absentee ballot.

I whole-heartedly support this bill as I believe that requiring voters to show photo identification is a reasonable precaution, given the possible consequences of voter fraud. We live in a society that requires identification for nearly everything: from writing a check or cashing a check at the bank to renting anything from a car to a movie to purchasing cigarettes or alcohol. I am sure that the majority of Wisconsinites agree that slight inconvenience to voters to show a photo id is a reasonable tradeoff for guaranteeing the sanctity of the ballot box.

Opponents have argued that requiring photo identification unfairly disadvantages voters of limited means. This bill addresses that problem by allowing electors to receive the photo identification cards from the Department of Transportation free of charge if the elector requests not to be charged.

I support AB 259, and believe that this bill will help insure the sanctity of the ballot without creating an unfair disadvantage for individuals of limited means.



Testimony on Assembly Bill 259

September 13, 2001

My name is Carol Weidel. Today I speak against this Bill.

I work as an election official at a ward in Madison and, like many other election officials with jobs, I take a day from work because I believe well-run elections are essential in a democratic society. I am the chair at the ward where I work and, as chair, I have to interpret election law and resolve problems that may occur on Election Day. I have had many opportunities to discuss the election process with staff in the city clerk's office and volunteer election officials like myself. These discussions and my own experience inform this testimony.

We have too few people voting. I am embarrassed that only a fourth of citizens eligible to vote exercise that right. Election reform must expand opportunities to vote.

I work on election days at a Central Madison location just west of the Capitol where our voters are primarily students, the elderly and the disabled. Requiring a picture ID will erect a barrier to voting.

The proposed requirement for a DOT Photo ID will force election officials to reject voters. I don't believe you want to prevent these people from voting -- first-time voters, homeless citizens, the disabled and the illiterate.

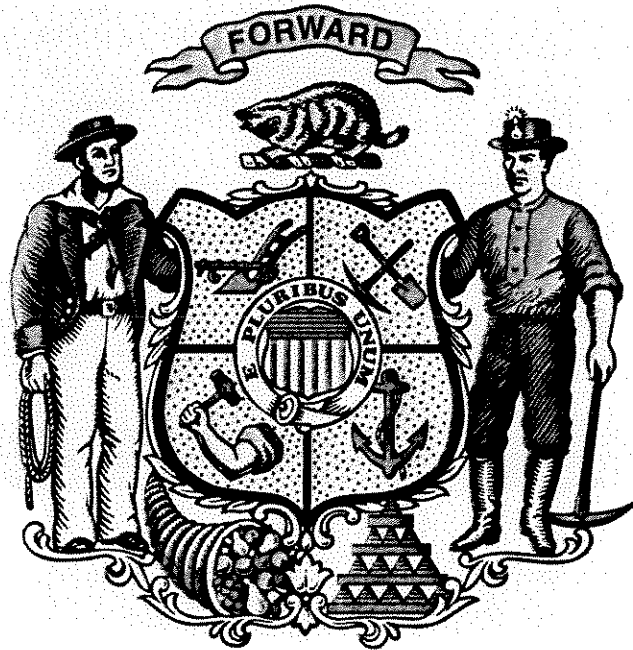
- Each election I register many **first-time voters**. They are people turning 18, or new citizens. Many of them have no DOT photo ID.
- I have registered **homeless voters**. These people have all the challenges of finding work and a place to live, but they can still vote. Many of them have no DOT photo ID.
- I have assisted **disabled and illiterate voters** who need assistance in marking the ballot. Despite their disabilities they come on Election Day to exercise their rights. Many of them have no DOT photo ID.

The problem with our democracy is not too many people voting. I urge you to defeat this Bill. Please support election reforms that make it easier for citizens to vote.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Carol Weidel
1237 E. Dayton St.
Madison, WI 53703

(608) 257-4608
carolaweidel@aol.com





The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Inc.

122 State Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53703-2500

608/256-0827 FX: 608/256-2853 EM: genfund@lwvwi.org URL: <http://www.lwvwi.org>

Statement to the Assembly Committee on Elections and Campaigns in Opposition to AB 259

**Assembly Parlor
Thursday, September 13, 2001**

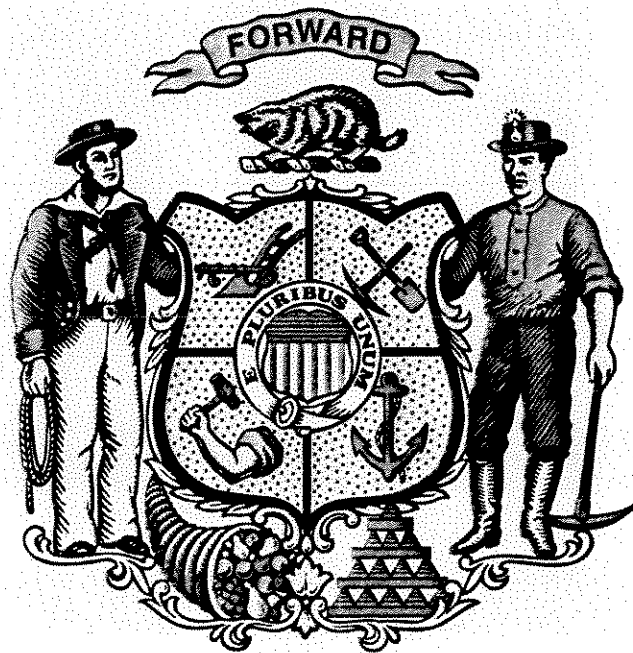
We are opposed to Assembly Bill 259 which seeks to make negative, unnecessary and unfair changes to Wisconsin's long and proud history of inclusive and fair elections. Requiring photo identification and eliminating the ability of an elector to utilize corroboration in order to register to vote is unjustified. League's actions are based on our long-standing principle that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote and on our specific positions related to election laws, reflecting member convictions that protecting the right to vote is indivisibly part of the League's basic purpose. League's voting rights actions have been taken not only to ensure access to the electoral process but to extend and enhance that process and the government's role therein.

We supported 1977-78 legislature's enactment of major election law reform, including the establishment of registration at the polls and the definition of identification needs for registration.

We are proud of our state's successful election procedures, and we will continue to fight to protect citizens' rights to participate in government and to oppose major threats to our basic constitutional rights, including the right to vote. We should focus on positive reform measures and refrain from focusing on negative reforms that will disenfranchise citizens who are less fortunate but none the less informed as to who they would choose to represent them in public office.

Let us not attempt to change an electoral process which is not broken; instead let us focus on reforms to improve an election system tainted by special interest influences and out-of-control campaign spending.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond.



9/13/01

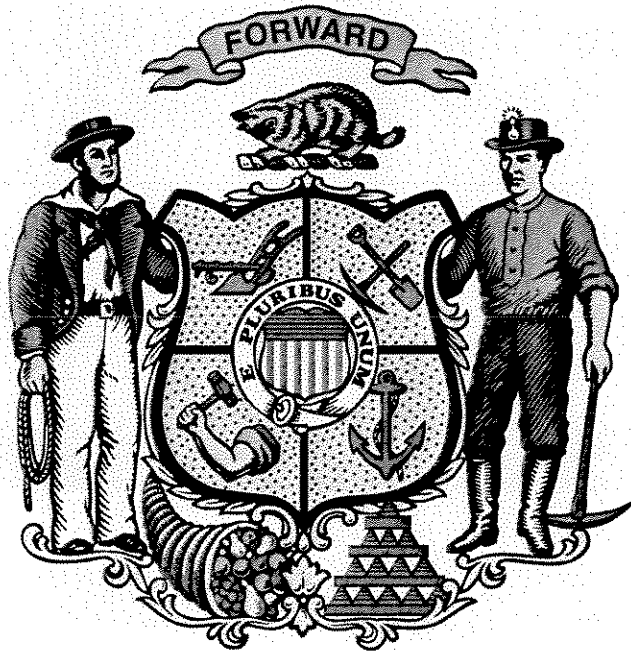
Rep. Freese,

Thank You for the opportunity to speak before the Assembly Campaigns and Elections subcommittee today. Unfortunately, I have to go to class at 1 PM. I was here to testify Against AB 259, which I find to be cumbersome and unnecessary.

Thank You,

David Presberry
David Presberry
Madison, WI

Associated Students of Madison



To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

From: Members and Staff of the Repairers of the Breach

Date: September 13, 2001

Re: Assembly Bill 259

The following testimonials were sent to Senator Gwendolynne S. Moore's office to be submitted on behalf of the members and staff of the Repairers of the Breach during the public hearing on Assembly Bill 259. Given the nature of their work and individual situations in Milwaukee, they are unable to attend a public hearing in Madison to register their opposition to Assembly Bill 259.

Repairers of the Breach is a not-for-profit homeless shelter in Milwaukee.

Testimony re: AB 259

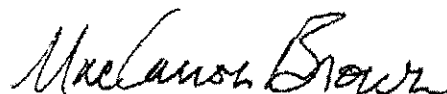
To require an address as a condition for eligibility to vote during a time when the growth rate of homelessness in Wisconsin is extreme is evidence of mean-spirited legislation that has its origins in the same kind of class and racial hatred that gave the world the holocaust.

The idea of eradicating or erasing the homeless voter abrades the leaders and members of Repairers of the Breach because we witness the willingness of large numbers of people, during their period of homelessness, to be informed on issues and on candidates. Many homeless people remain aware of what is going on globally, nationally and locally. These persons cherish knowing that what they think has value. To demonstrate this, hundreds of homeless voters have registered to vote in Milwaukee during the last several years—without the insult of being bribed by cigarettes.

If this legislation is passed, it will be to Wisconsin's War on the Poor equivalent to the destruction of the World Trade Center. For in the cruel aftermath of radical-welfare-reform-with-scarcely-any-safety-net at least we have preserved the sacred right of individuals, no matter their status of life, to vote.

Destroying homeless voter eligibility says we do not consider a homeless person a complete human being. If we approve AB 259, we can no longer claim Wisconsin to be a "progressive" state. During the time of slavery, when our country held credence in language stating that people of African origin were not complete humans, our State championed the processes of freedom with our underground railroad. This legislation is nothing else but a bloody footprint stepping backwards into repression, ignorance and hatred.

MacCanon Brown
Executive Director
Repairers of the Breach
414-305-8997



To Whom it may Concern
It has been said that these are the
times that try mens souls.

We the poor are battered from all sides
Being a former homeless person I will
never understand why our Law makers
are trying to deny homeless the right
to vote. That is our God given right.

This holes true more so for our Veterans
who have put their Life on the Line for this
country. I dare you to even attempt to
committe this crime. If you have any
compassion at all in your heart for
your fellow human being you will stop
this at once. I beg of you please dont
kick us while we are down.

We do what we have to, to survive on the
streets. There are as many reasons for being
homeless as there are homeless people.

Thank You.

Richard Dickerson

Katherine Wolfe

Why The Homeless Should be Heard!

I think we all should be heard, even
the homeless have a word

If you take away our rights, you might
as well erase us from your sight

Yes I think the homeless should have
a voice, cause like every one else we
have a choice

We haven't always lived on the streets,
we use to have a home and live real
neat

If you ask me there's no difference
between you and I, one vote or two
can make you cry

you let them vote who have a home
Why can't we vote cause we ~~own~~^{own} our
own

If you ask me we have more to say,
cause there's no one here to help us
today

The homeless people can tell you a
lot, about how it feels to be out in
the dark

So don't take our votes away from us,
they'll count and bring you luck
we may not have riches through out
this land, but we do have votes
and a helping hand

They say one vote can make a difference,
So let ours count with a little
The Repairs of the Breach gives
us all they can, so take our votes
and give us a change

Thank you
Mrs. Katherine L. Wolfe

Claudia

They don't have anywhere to live. Everyone has a right to have a home. If half the population is homeless, it means they won't be able to vote, ~~so~~ and that won't be good for the country.

"I truly believe that homeless people should have the right to vote, because we are still human beings. Just because we don't have homes, it does not make us any less worthy."

"Homelessness is a huge population in Milwaukee. If you removed our right to vote, you would be eliminating a large population!"

"Many of us homeless are just as educated about politics as everyone else. We deserve the same treatment!"

9-12-01

Simple - All individuals
have a right to vote.

Being homeless makes no
difference. You are still an
individual with rights.

Homeless people need opportunity to
get jobs and can change their
lives.

Larry

don't think that it's right. Their
saying you're not capable or coherent
to vote. Their saying you're less than a
human being. I'm an American citizen
and it says it is my constitutional right
and their saying the poor shouldn't
have a right to vote.

Lark L. Turner

Katherine Wolfe

I think we all should be heard, even
the homeless. have a word.

If you take away our right, you might
as well erase us from sight.

So I think the homeless should have a
voice, cause like everyone else we have
a choice.

We didn't always live on the street. We
use to have homes and live real neat.

There's no different between you and I,
one vote or two can make you cry.

You let me vote when I have a home,
why can't I vote cause I'm all alone.

If you ask me I have more to say,
cause there's no one here to help us

today.

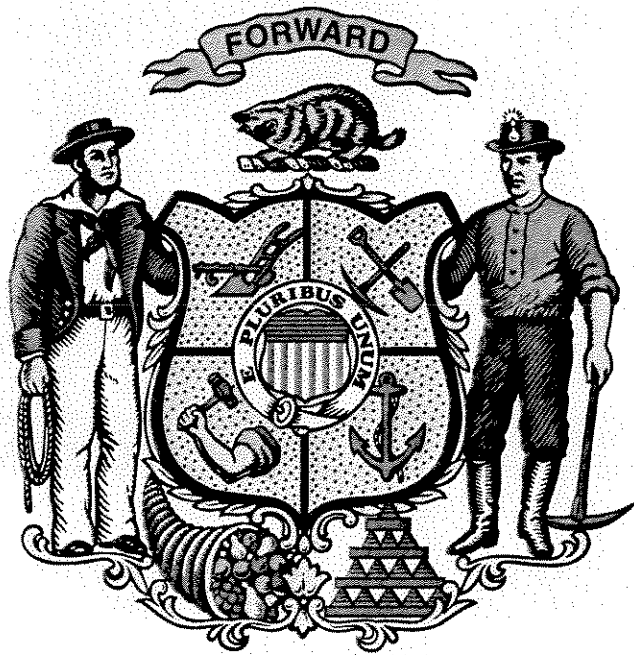
The homeless people can tell you a
lot, about how it ~~feels~~ feels to be out
in the dark.

So don't take my vote away from me,
it will count you'll see.

We may not have riches throughout this land
but we do have votes and a helping hand.

They tell me one vote can make a different
so let ours count with a S. A. G.

The repairs of the porch give us all they
can, so take our votes and give us a change.



State Senator GWENDOLYNNE MOORE

Capitol Office:
P. O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882
Phone: (608) 266-5810 Fax: (608) 267-2353
District Telephone: (414) 442-3080
Toll-free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-362-9472
E-Mail: sen.moore@legis.state.wi.us
Member: Joint Finance Committee
Board Member: Wisconsin Housing and
Economic Development Authority

Testimony of State Senator Gwendolynne Moore on Assembly Bill 259 Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections September 13, 2001

Good morning. I would like to thank Chairman Freese and the members of the Committee on Campaigns and Elections for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 259.

The November 2000 elections posed the nation and its individual states with serious doubts about the soundness of the electoral process.

- According to an August 20, 2001, House Committee on Judiciary report prepared for Representative John Conyers entitled "*How to Make Over One Million Votes Disappear*", **at least 1,276,916 voters in 31 states and the District of Columbia had their votes discarded with no vote for president.**
- According to the July 2001 Cal Tech/MIT Voting Technology Report entitled "What is; What Could Be", **as many as 4- to 6 million presidential votes were lost in the election process in 2000.**
- A June 2001 investigative report issued by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found that, "*Despite the closeness of the election, it was widespread voter disenfranchisement, not the dead-heat contest, that was the extraordinary feature in the Florida election. The disenfranchisement was not isolated or episodic. State officials failed to fulfill their duties in a manner that would prevent this disenfranchisement*".
- Report after report in the aftermath of Election 2000 describe the widespread disenfranchisement of low-income, minority, elderly and disabled voters that occurred not just in Florida but nationwide. Examples of this injustice cited in Conyers' report include:
 - In at least 18 states, voters reported serious instances of election-related police misconduct or misconduct by election officials;
 - In at least 17 states and the District of Columbia, voters registered complaints about inadequate assistance at the polls;
 - Disabled voters in at least 18 states reported inaccessible polling stations and confusing ballots. In fact, few precincts in the US have fully accessible voting machines and the vast majority deny voters with disabilities the fundamental right to vote with privacy and independence.
 - In New Mexico, the Republican Party attempted to harass and intimidate Hispanic voters by creating a flier sent to predominantly Hispanic communities with a \$20,000 reward to those who reported fraud incidents,

and a \$5,000 reward for information that led to the first conviction for engaging in false voting;

- In South Carolina, Republican poll workers who challenged African-American voters in Charleston and Sumter Counties wore poll watcher badges that looked like police shields;
- One of the major complaints in Texas involved a leaflet distributed in African-American Communities in which seven African-Americans who were actively involved in elections were accused of voter fraud and “selling votes to the highest bidder”.

Sadly, we may never know just how many intimidated and frustrated disabled, elderly, or minority voters simply gave up and left the polls without casting a ballot in the 2000 elections.

These facts should serve to give us pause. It is a fundamental function of government to ensure that each citizen truly has equal and unimpeded access to the ballot box and that each American voice is properly recorded. It is also important for the judicial branches of government to pursue the vigorous enforcement of laws when deliberate election fraud does indeed occur. However, as legislators, we must balance our duty to safeguard our system from election fraud against our duty to protect the voter’s rights. We must not be swayed to alter the basic tenets of our election laws based solely upon the *perceived* fear of voter fraud. We must proceed with extreme caution when we entertain any legislation under the guise of “reform” that could compromise the franchise of our citizens. Ultimately, the voter’s right to participate in the election process must be paramount.

Assembly Bill 259 does, in fact, compromise a voter’s right to participate in the election process.

AB 259 places undue and unnecessary burdens on some of our most vulnerable voters, including our low-income, minority, elderly, disabled, homeless and student citizens by requiring all voters – regardless of whether they are registered or not – to present a DOT-issued Wisconsin driver’s license or photo ID in order to obtain a ballot. The bill further strips the homeless of their right to vote by eliminating a voter’s right to utilize corroboration by another registered voter.

To those that would question these facts, one need only look to the fiscal note prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for AB 259. According to this analysis:

- 122,798 Wisconsin residents do not currently have a Wisconsin driver’s license or Wisconsin photo identification card.
- DOT estimates that were AB 259 to become law, only 20% of these people would actually obtain a photo identification card.
- That means that nearly 100,000 Wisconsin residents who can vote under current law will be disenfranchised by this bill.
- The total cost of this bill, in terms additional staff time and lost revenue, would be roughly \$850,000 annually.

As disturbing as these facts are, you will not find the underlying costs of AB 259 on our fundamental franchise listed on any fiscal note.

Voters must not be locked into the rigid requirement to show a valid Wisconsin driver's license or photo id to receive their ballot or be denied the right to vote.

- As I mentioned, the DOT estimates that roughly 100,000 Wisconsin residents would be disenfranchised by this bill. Many of these people do not have the time or the resources to go to the DMV to obtain identification simply to vote. For example, if AB 259 were passed, a low-income person would be forced to give up a few hours of precious unpaid vacation time to visit the DMV or an elderly person who may have health problems would have to stand in the DMV line for hours simply to maintain their franchise.
- Students from out of state who study at Wisconsin's colleges and universities and are eligible to vote in this state could not present photo identification from their home state or a university identification card in order to prove their identity. They, too, would have to go to the DMV to obtain a Wisconsin photo identification card.
- Many of Wisconsin's most diligent voters have been registered at the same address and have voted at the same polling station for most of their adult lives. This is particularly true in Milwaukee's inner city, where many low-income minority voters have never had the kind of photo identification required in AB 259. The integrity of these dedicated voters is called into question and additional burdens are placed upon them under this bill.
- Most states do not require an identification card, photo or otherwise, for their state's registered voters. In fact, 29 states are *precluded* by state statute from asking for any kind of voter identification at the polls.
- Most importantly, however, this bill would, in effect, end Wisconsin's same day registration. Under AB 259, if you did not have a valid DOT-issued Wisconsin photo id by the time the DMV closed on election day, you would lose your right to vote. This notion goes against Wisconsin's treasured principle of open, easy access to the ballot box on election day.

Voter registration by corroboration must not be repealed.

- Currently, a person who does not have a residential address can vote if that person brings with them to the polls another registered voter from the same municipality. **This means that homelessness in Wisconsin does not mean disenfranchisement.**
- According to the January 8, 2001, edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association, 1% of the US population is homeless throughout the course of a year. Given the unprecedented closeness of last year's election, it should be even clearer to us that each and every vote in our country has enormous importance.
- As many as one-third of the nation's homeless are veterans. While it is abhorrent that any citizen without a residence would be denied the right to vote under this bill, its disproportionate effect on Wisconsin veterans is simply disgraceful.

- AB 259 would not only take away a person's right to vote by corroboration but would further require that person to show photo id. We should not strip a voter of his or her rights simply because that person lacks an address.

There is no compelling state interest to enact these changes...

The U.S. Supreme Court has consistently ruled that any laws restricting the right to vote are unconstitutional unless the State can demonstrate that such laws are necessary to promote a compelling governmental interest. What possible compelling government interest exists to prompt such huge changes Wisconsin's election laws that have never proven to elicit any widespread voter fraud? Claims of multiple voting in Milwaukee County, which were proven false by the Milwaukee County District Attorney's office as well as an independent review by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, have nonetheless fueled the calls for election reform among my Republican colleagues in the state. Let me reiterate this point for those of you who may have missed it: *No widespread voter fraud occurred in Wisconsin during this election cycle as it did in other states.*

The mere *perception* of voter fraud provides no factual basis, no compelling interest, to change the tenets of Wisconsin's open election system, which consistently produces one of the highest voter turnouts in the nation and encourages voters from all walks of life to participate in our democracy. **And, for those of you who may be confused about this point, the fact that you need to show a photo id to rent a movie from Blockbuster Video does not constitute a compelling state interest to dramatically change our election laws.**

Wisconsin has a long, proud history of progressive election laws and of inclusiveness in the electoral process.

In fact, Wisconsin was one of the first states to give its immigrants to vote. In 1848, our state's Constitution allowed immigrants to vote as they declared their intention for naturalization. For over 150 years, our state has sought to make the polls as accessible as possible to new voters. November 7, 2000 was no exception.

November 7, 2000, was a very successful election day for Wisconsin:

- 66.5% of eligible voters turned out statewide—the third highest turnout in the nation, behind only Minnesota and Maine (two other same-day registration states).
- Total turnout was by far the largest in the state's history.

November 7, 2000, was a successful election day for Milwaukee, as well:

- 81,500 Milwaukee residents alone registered to vote at the polls on election day,
- Turnout in many of Milwaukee's African-American and Hispanic wards soared to unprecedented heights. In the 9th Assembly District in the southwestern side of Milwaukee, for example, turnout this year was 43% higher than in 1996.

While Republicans turned out voters in record numbers this year, Democrats got out more votes than anyone could have predicted, particularly Democratic voters in Milwaukee's African American neighborhoods. Now, under the guise of election

“reform”, the bill being debated here today will have the effect of disenfranchising many of Wisconsin’s poor, minority, elderly, handicapped, homeless, and student voters, many of whom tend to vote Democratic. While I certainly hope that the intent of this proposal is not to silence the voices of Wisconsin’s most vulnerable who happen to vote Democratic, the effect of this proposal will do just that.

Oh, the things we could do with \$850,000 a year to improve our election system...

Given the high number of voters in last year’s election, it is no doubt that the system was stressed to the very limit and that some ballot errors did occur, as they do in every election. However, if any changes are to be made to current law, the allocation of additional funding to municipalities to assist in election administration, as well as additional resources to encourage voter education and voter turnout would be preferable. How many times have we heard in the past year that poll workers are overworked and underpaid? How many times have we heard that punch card machines need to be replaced, but municipalities have no money to replace them?

In fact, I proposed a budget amendment that would have allocated \$229,300 – a mere fraction of the money that would be spent on erecting additional barriers to voting here in AB 259 - to establish an election assistance grant program for municipalities wishing to expand poll worker training, recruitment, or voter education efforts or upgrade voting equipment would be eligible for the grant. Such funding could be used to provide training to those volunteers staffing the polling places, to recruit additional poll volunteers, and to send out materials which advertise the election, direct citizens to their proper polling place, and encourage voters to pre-register. This motion was defeated 8-8 in the Joint Committee on Finance and a similar motion that was included in the Senate Budget Amendment was removed by the Conference Committee.

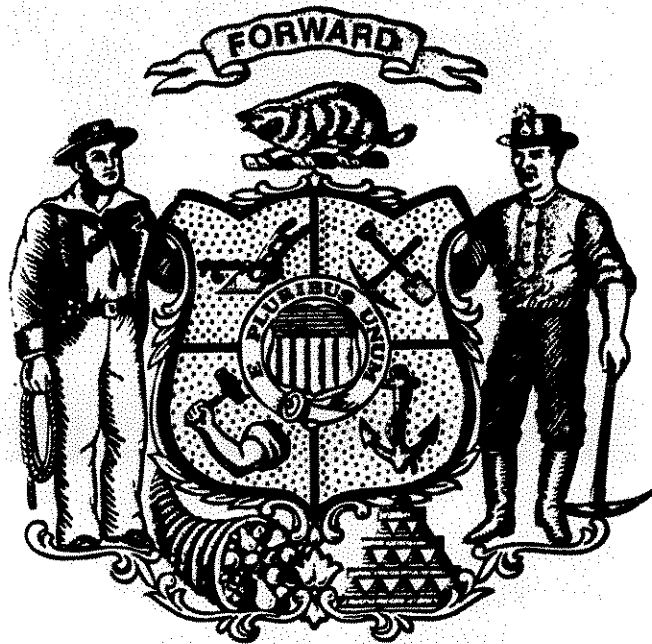
I have also introduced Senate Bill 110, which calls for:

- voter eligibility education to prevent erroneous voting by ineligible voters,
- uniform polling hours,
- a study of multilingual and disabled voting needs,
- an in-depth analysis of whether Wisconsin should establish a statewide voter registration list and how such a list would operate,
- an easing of restrictions on state employee’s leave for service as an election official;
and
- the establishment of satellite voting stations in public places to register voters and accept absentee ballots in the weeks prior to an election.

These measures would help our elections to run smoothly and efficiently by decreasing lines and strain on poll workers, providing resources to update antiquated voting machinery, providing educational resources for voters, and addressing the deficiencies that may impede eligible multilingual and disabled voters.

While it can always be improved upon, Wisconsin's system is based on the promotion of voter turnout and in the good faith of our citizens. The high level of voter turnout across the state, which was fueled by Wisconsin's successful open election laws, is something that all elected officials alike should be celebrating. Instead, we continue to listen to legislators beat a dead horse about voter fraud that never occurred and continue to debate bills like AB 259 that will *discourage* voter turnout and will hinder the democratic process in Wisconsin. The effect of additional restrictions on voters will be voter disenfranchisement, which will be felt the most by poor, minority, elderly, handicapped, homeless, and student voters.

I hope, as you consider your vote on AB 259, the members of this Committee remember that the integrity of our election system can only be protected only by ensuring that every voice continues to be heard. Once again, I thank Chairman Freese and the Committee for its time and I welcome any questions you may have.





Wisconsin State Public Interest Research Group
1121 University Ave., Madison, WI 53715 (608) 251-1918
www.wispirg.org wispirg@pirg.org

Testimony of Kerry Schumann, WISPIRG Director, in opposition to AB 259

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am the Director of the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group, or WISPIRG. WISPIRG is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, advocacy organization working to protect the environment, protect consumers and promote democracy. We have about 15,000 members statewide.

I am here to testify in opposition to AB 259. Wisconsin's present electoral system is a model for other states. Our laws promote democracy and encourage voter participation. The attempts to "reform" voting laws, like AB 259, run counter to our democratic process.

Requiring photo identification to vote is unnecessary. After last November's elections, rumors of individuals voting multiple times circulated widely. Members of the legislature immediately began calling for restrictions on Wisconsin citizens' right to vote, even before the claims of fraud were substantiated. And, as we now know, those claims of multiple voting were simply the boastful lies of a Marquette University student. This bill is a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. No widespread voter fraud occurred in Wisconsin during the 2000 Presidential elections.

Most states do not require identification at the polls. 29 states do not require identification and are actually precluded by state law from asking for it. Only 13 states require identification, and 8 states, including Wisconsin, may ask for identification in certain circumstances. Ironically, one of the states that requires a photo identification is Florida, the state that proved to have the worst problems in the November elections. It would be very unfortunate if Wisconsin were to go from having some of the most open voting laws in the country to joining a handful of states that have unnecessary barriers in the way of voting.

I am also deeply concerned about how this will affect students. Last year, the WISPIRG student chapters were involved in voter registration drives at UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee that resulted in almost 20,000 student being registered to vote and in very high voter turnout in campus wards. Many of those students are from out-of-state, but for four or more years will reside in the city where they attend college. Obviously we want the youth of Wisconsin to vote, and they should vote in the place where they live and are engaged in daily life, not in the state where their parents live. However, few out-of-state students have Wisconsin driver's licenses or identification. Students, because they are a transitory population, frequently register at the polls. I can only imagine the number of students who would be turned away because they do not have Wisconsin identification on election day.

The fundamental problem with requiring a photo identification, or any form of identification, at the polls, is that it creates an undue barrier to voting. Not everyone has a photo id, and offering one free of charge at the DOT does not solve that problem. For citizens who have limited access to transportation, jobs they can't miss or who move frequently, requiring a Wisconsin photo identification to vote makes it much more difficult to cast their vote.

We live in a representative democracy. In order for that democracy to work, citizens need to have access to the polls. With every barrier that goes up between the citizenry and the voting booth, we lose more potential voters. Voter turnout was high in Wisconsin last November. In fact, it was one of the highest in the country with over 66% of eligible voters participating in their democracy. I think we can safely attribute much of that to our existing election laws that create an accessible voting environment. Whether it's same-day registration or allowing another citizen vouch for you, our laws are strong here in Wisconsin. They are a gateway for democracy.

The lesson that should be learned from the November elections is not how can we limit access to democracy, but how can we better enhance our voting systems? We should be looking at hiring more poll workers in preparation for high voter turnout. AB 339, which is also before you today, would help municipalities increase the number of poll workers. WISPIRG supports that measure. Perhaps the state should consider weekend voting, two day voting or mail-in voting. We should enhance access to democracy rather than limiting it.

I urge you to oppose AB 259 and any other attempts to weaken voting laws and consider options to improve our electoral system. Wisconsin has a strong tradition of democracy. Let's keep it that way.