

Testimony of State Representative Shirley Krug
Senate Committee on Homeland Security, Veterans and Military Affairs and
Government Reform
Assembly Bill 18
April 9, 2003

Chairman Brown, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on AB 18.

AB 18 is very simple: it gives the Milwaukee County Board (Board) the ability to downsize itself.

Under current law, the Board had the option to increase or decrease its membership at the time it adopted its redistricting plan. A few community activists actually advocated for increasing the size of the Board in order to create additional opportunity for minority representation. Several members seriously discussed reducing the size of the Board, but it was deemed unlikely to withstand a veto from our former county executive. In the end, the status quo prevailed.

There is now an overwhelming consensus in the community that the number of supervisors should be reduced. Indeed, the Board finally endorsed this legislation on a 19 to 6 vote on January 23, 2003. This vote included that of the first African-American Chairman of the Board, Lee Holloway. The Milwaukee Common Council has also taken up the issue of downsizing. All five African-American or Hispanic members of the Council supported downsizing.

Reasons to downsize the Board include the following: Over time, the direct oversight role of the county for various services and programs has been reduced. To give a few examples, the state took over child welfare services. The County no longer runs a hospital. The natural history museum was spun off to a private entity. If we reduce the number of supervisors, they will each have more responsibility, not just in providing oversight for county functions but also in representing more constituents.

Although this bill does not dictate the number, I believe an ideal choice would be 19 or 17. An odd number should be preserved for tie breaking purposes.

A lower number has raised concerns in the Hispanic community that there would not be a Hispanic member to serve on the Board. However, the Board resolution indicated that even if they were to reduce their number to 17, there would be sufficient population to create a district with 60% Hispanic voting age population. By way of comparison, the 8th Assembly District currently represented by Pedro Colon has a 58.34% Hispanic voting age population. These and other concerns are the sorts of issues the Board will have to discuss before it makes its decision.

Dropping from the current 25 to 19 or 17 members will be a dramatic change. It will be difficult for the Board to do, even in the post recall environment.

Thank you. I'd be glad to respond to your questions.



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
AMENDMENT MEMO

2003 Assembly Bill 18

**Assembly Amendments 1 and 2
and Senate Amendment 1**

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Currently, the number of county board supervisors for a county is established once every 10 years in conjunction with the federal decennial census and resulting reapportionment. Section 59.10 (2) (a) and (3) (b), Stats. Once the number of county board supervisors is established, the number may not be changed until the next decennial reapportionment. Section 59.10 (3) (c), Stats.

Assembly Bill 18 authorizes the county board in a county with a population of at least 500,000 (currently, Milwaukee County), by a 2/3rds vote of all county board members, to decrease the size of the county board between each decennial federal census, but not more frequently than once every four years. Currently, the Milwaukee County Board has 25 supervisors.

Assembly Amendment 1 eliminates the 2/3rds vote requirement for decreasing the number of county board supervisors between each decennial federal census. Thus, under the amendment, the board would be able to decrease the number of supervisors by majority vote (i.e., majority of a quorum).

Assembly Amendment 2 limits the proposal's authority to decrease the size of the county board to a decrease and accompanying redistricting plan enacted prior to November 15 of this year. (After that time, the size of the county board may be changed in conjunction with the decennial reapportionment.)

Senate Amendment 1 modifies the language inserted by Assembly Amendment 2. Under Senate Amendment 1, the authority to decrease the size of the Milwaukee County Board and change the redistricting plan may be used not more than once before November 15, 2010. (After that time, the size of the county board may be changed in conjunction with the decennial reapportionment.)

Assembly Amendment 1, offered by the Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs, was adopted by the Assembly on a voice vote on March 11, 2003.

Assembly Amendment 2, offered by Representatives Stone and Krug, was adopted by the Assembly by a vote of Ayes, 74; Noes, 20 on March 11, 2003.

Senate Amendment 1, offered by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, Veterans and Military Affairs and Government Reform, was recommended for adoption by the committee, and the amended bill was recommended for concurrence by the committee, both on votes of Ayes, 5; Noes, 0;

on April 30, 2003. The Senate adopted Senate Amendment 1, and concurred in the bill as amended, both on voice votes, on May 6, 2003.

DD:RNS;jal:wu:tlu:ksm;tlu;ksm



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
ACT MEMO

2003 Wisconsin Act 32
[2003 Assembly Bill 18]

**Milwaukee County Board of
Supervisors**

2003 Acts: www.legis.state.wi.us/2003/data/acts/

Act Memos: www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/act_memo/act_memo.htm

2003 Wisconsin Act 32 allows the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors to decrease the number of members that serve on the board prior to the next 10-year census.

The statutes provide that the number of county board supervisors that serve on a county board is established once every 10 years in conjunction with the federal decennial census and reapportionment.

Act 32 allows the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors, not more than once prior to November 15, 2010, to decrease the number of supervisors that serve on the board. If the board does so, it is required to redistrict, readjust, and change the boundaries of supervisory districts, so that the number of districts equals the number of supervisors, the districts are substantially equal in population, the districts are in as compact a form as possible, and the districts consist of contiguous whole wards in existence at the time at which the redistricting plan is adopted. Any redistricting plan adopted under the Act becomes effective on the first November 15 following its enactment, and first applies to the spring election following the plan's effective date.

Effective Date: Act 32 takes effect on August 5, 2003.

Prepared by: Richard Sweet, Senior Staff Attorney

August 29, 2003

RNS:rv:wu;ksm

This memo provides a brief description of the Act. For more detailed information,
consult the text of the law and related legislative documents.