
State of Wisconsin
Office of the Governor

August 10, 2021

The Honorable, the Senate:

I am vetoing **Senate Bill 212** in its entirety.

This bill explicitly prohibits any person other than a voter or a witness from correcting an error on an absentee ballot and creates a method of notifying a voter via a website that their ballot will be discarded if not corrected.

I am vetoing this bill because I object to its prohibition on the current, long-standing practice of clerks in this state correcting minor errors and believe that this bill will almost certainly result in valid ballots never being counted. The bill would create severe penalties for a clerk making the most minor of corrections to an otherwise properly completed absentee ballot certificate, such as fixing the zip code. There is a clear difference between a ballot where the witness simply missed the zip code portion of the address, though the rest was complete, and a ballot that had no witness at all. This bill would treat all errors the same, requiring all ballots with even the most inconsequential typo to either be discarded or sent back to the voter if the clerk has time.

Additionally, because the bill would prevent any person but the voter or witness from correcting their respective mistakes, and because ballots will be discarded if not corrected, the method of notifying voters of an error become critically important. The bill only requires that notification of an error be posted via the MyVote Wisconsin website. Other means of contact are allowed but not required. While it may be practical for a clerk to call a small number of voters who have made an error, it is unrealistic for clerks to call large numbers of voters to warn them that their ballot is being discarded if they do not correct it. A person in a community with fewer people, and therefore fewer absentee voters, may be likely to receive such a warning call, but a person in a more populated area is unlikely to be called and warned. Furthermore, by only requiring voters to be warned via a website that their vote will not be counted, this bill would also disadvantage populations throughout the state who may have difficulty using or accessing the internet.

Respectfully submitted,
TONY EVERS
Governor