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Testimony on Assembly Bill 845 Assembly Committee on Judiciary March 13th, 2014

Thank you Chairman Ott and committee members for holding this hearing on AB 845 today. I appreciate the opportunity to offer my support for the bill.

AB 845 is a simple bill to help district attorneys recruit and hire quality assistant district attorneys in their offices. Current law prohibits a former district attorney from receiving credit for that service if they would be appointed as an assistant district attorney when it comes to their base pay calculation. In other words, a former DA hired on as an assistant DA would start out at the minimum pay. That just doesn't make sense.

When Senator Grothman first approached me about being the Assembly lead on this bill, I was honestly shocked that such an oversight existed. Then, when I spoke with DA's from around my district, I realized that this was a real problem they are facing. I'm glad that Winnebago County DA Christian Gossett is here to speak today on how current law ties his hands and how this bill will help him.

The final point I will add is that the companion bill, SB 631, passed through the State Senate yesterday on a voice vote, showing it has broad bipartisan support.

Again, thank you very much for holding this hearing today, and I'd be happy to take any questions you may have.

March 13, 2014

To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Judiciary
From: Senator Glenn Grothman
Re: Assembly Bill 845

This legislation was brought to me by one of my constituents, Ozaukee County District Attorney Adam Gerol. He alerted me that many district attorneys would like to hire former district attorneys to fill their assistant district attorney positions, but the former district attorneys are not able to be compensated for their years of service. There are other district attorneys that are supportive of this legislation and I have included their emails with my testimony.

Under current law, a former district attorney would be appointed at the minimum of the pay range for assistant district attorneys, regardless of how many years they served as a district attorney. This legislation will allow a former district attorney to receive credit for their service if they are appointed as an assistant district attorney within five years of separating from their district attorney position.

This bill will allow district attorneys to fill their assistant district attorney positions with experienced and qualified individuals. This will also allow former district attorneys the ability to continue to serve the state.

Please join me in supporting this commonsense legislation that will benefit district attorneys throughout the state trying to recruit new assistant district attorneys.

VerVelde, Rachel

From: Fox, Gerald <Gerald.Fox@da.wi.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 04, 2014 10:30 AM
To: Sen.Grothman
Cc: Gerol, Adam Y - DAIT
Subject: Support for SB631

Dear Senator Grothman: I am writing to you at the invitation of District Attorney Adam Gerol, who has been a powerful voice for elected DAs across the state. I understand that there will be a hearing tomorrow on SB 631, but I cannot attend, owing to my duties here in Jackson County. Please accept my personal thanks for sponsoring SB631, the bill to award credit for entry pay calculation to former elected DAs. I respectfully urge you and your colleagues to forward this bill to the Governor. As one who currently serves as an elected district attorney, I can attest to the investment the taxpayers have made, and will make in the future, in my expertise and experience, which would be extremely marketable in the private sector were I to be removed from office in a contested election.

I could make much more as a criminal defense attorney in private practice. In fact, one of my worthy opponents (a former elected DA himself), likes to remind me that he pays more in alimony than I make in salary, and because I know his ex-wife, I know that he is not exaggerating. Nevertheless, I choose to devote my public life to defending the peace and safety of this community, and would probably choose to continue that service as an Assistant District Attorney, if I could be assured of having my current service recognized in the pay progression system the legislature so wisely enacted recently. This bill would ensure that if I chose to leave this post (or was shown the door by the electorate, as is their right) I could accept an ADA position that, while not equating to my current pay, would at least recognize my value as a seasoned prosecutor, in common with ADAs of the same length of service.

Thanks for listening, and for all you do to keep Wisconsin moving forward. g

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