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41ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

AB 573: Declarations of Domestic Partnerships
Testimony of State Representative Joan Ballweg
Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs
January 20, 2016

Thank you, Chair Brooks, and members of the Committee on Urban and Local Affairs for holding this public hearing.

Assembly Bill 573 was brought to us by the Wisconsin County Clerks Association. This bill brings the domestic partnership registry in line with the current practices for processing marriage licenses.

First, the domestic partnership registry would be amended to have unfiled domestic partnership licenses expire after 30 days. Under current law, a couple can walk into the county clerk's office, fill out the required paperwork, and never pick it up to file it in the register of deeds office. Unclaimed domestic partnership licenses can sit in the clerk's office forever, while unclaimed marriage licenses expire after 30 days.

To ease the administrative burden on having to store unclaimed records, AB 573 would expire any license that remains unfiled within 30 days from the date of issuance. This brings the domestic partnership statute to parity with the marriage statute.

Secondly, this legislation also amends Wisconsin Statutes to increase the fee a county clerk may charge for waiving the waiting period for issuing a declaration of domestic partnership from \$10 to \$25.

This change makes the allowable fee consistent with the waiver fee allowed for a marriage license. It is up to each county board to set the waiver fee. AB 573 sets the maximum fee equally for domestic partnership and marriage licenses.

Finally, this bill would also amend statutes that require clerks to provide the fetal alcohol pamphlets to those apply for a marriage license by changing the word "pamphlet" to "information." Changing this requirement to information will allow clerks to direct applicants to regularly updated information as provided by the Department of Health Services.

Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions.