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Senate Committee on Elections, Ethics and Rural Issues
Testimony on Senate Bill 221
June 12, 2019

Members of the Committee,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of Senate Bill 221 relating to government-issued documents that allow for voters to establish residence.

Senate Bill 221 would allow voters to use W-2 forms from a private employer to establish proof of residence when registering to vote. Current Wisconsin law states that a document establishes an elector's residence if it is issued by a government unit and includes their current name and address.

Currently, Wisconsin statutes do not list W-2 forms from private employers as an option for establishing proof of residence, nor do they define them as government documents. Therefore, W-2s from private employers are not accepted. Yet, W-2s contain an individual's current name and address and do qualify as acceptable forms of proof of residence for public employees.

This bill would add a layer of consistency in Wisconsin statutes for all voters by providing a convenient option for electors working in the private sector when registering to vote. The rules for registering to vote ought to be consistent, regardless of an elector's status as a private or public employee.

I would like to thank everyone who has come to testify today and welcome additional input from the public and committee members. At this time I am happy to answer any questions that committee members may have. Thank you all for your time and your consideration.

Testimony on Senate Bill 221
W-2 Forms to Register to Vote

Senate Committee on Elections, Ethics & Rural Issues
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Good afternoon, members of the Committee. Thank you for holding a hearing today on Senate Bill 221, a bill that adds W-2 forms from a private employer to the list of acceptable forms of proof of residence for Wisconsin citizens to use when registering to vote.

Under current Wisconsin law, there are several acceptable forms of proof of residence for a Wisconsin voter to use when registering to vote. Outside of a few specified items, such as a paystub or utility bill, the statutes only state that the document should be issued by a government unit and include an individual's current name and address.

Because W-2 forms from a private employer are not specifically listed in state statutes as an acceptable form of proof of residence and they are not government documents, W-2s from a private employer are not currently accepted. Yet, they have an individual's current name and address, are very similar to a paystub, and are acceptable forms of proof of residence for public employees, as they are a government issued document.

Under Senate Bill 221, W-2 forms from a private employer would be added to the list of acceptable forms of proof of residence for Wisconsin citizens to use when registering to vote. This provides consistency in the statutes for voters and also provides a common sense option for those working in the private sector to use when registering to vote.

The rules for registering to vote should be consistent, regardless of whether you are a private or public employee. Please join us in supporting this bill.

Thank you.

Written Testimony of State Senator Lena C. Taylor
Senate Committee on Elections, Ethics, and Rural Issues

June 12, 2019

Senate Bill 221

Chairwoman Bernier, Members of the Committee, thank you for granting me the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding Senate Bill 221 which adds the W-2 form to the list of identifying documents that electors may use as proof of residence to register to vote in the state of Wisconsin.

Under current law, an elector may use a multitude of identifying documents as proof of residence including a bank statement, paycheck, utility bill, property tax bill, check or other document issued by a unit of government or a current and valid operator's license or identification card issued by the Department of Transportation. Current law requires such identifying documents to specify the elector's name and residential address.

As of May 1 2019, there was a total of 3,419,294 registered voters in the state of Wisconsin with 91,700 coming from my district in the heart of Milwaukee County according to the Wisconsin Elections Commission. The 2018 midterm elections brought record breaking turnout with approximately 2.7 million voters according to the Journal Sentinel. This was around 60% of the Wisconsin voting age population and turnout in Milwaukee County alone rose by 14%.

With Wisconsin voter turnout rising, citizens of voting age should be continuously encouraged to vote with increasing levels of convenience. Adding the W2 form to the list of identifying documents that electors may use as proof of residence to register to vote ensures that eligible voters are able to exercise their rights.

The reality is that not all Wisconsin constituents have the privilege of having a bank account, utility bill, property tax bill, or a current and valid operator's license or identification card issued by the Department of Transportation. A W-2 form indicating wages and tax statements ensures that Wisconsin workers can establish residency. This permits those who want to exercise their right to vote to do so more easily.

Chairwoman Bernier, Members of the committee, the election process is a fundamental part of Wisconsin and American democracy and this process must be accessible to all eligible Wisconsin voters. The addition of the W-2 form to the list of identifying documents that an elector may use as a proof of residence expands access to voter registration to Wisconsin constituents. I trust that like me, you understand the importance of improving voter registration methods and this bill works towards that goal. For this reason, I respectfully urge you to support SB 221. Thank you for your time and attention.

Senator Lena C. Taylor

4th Senate District