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*Testimony before the Senate Committee on Local Government, Small Business,  
Tourism and Workforce Development  
State Senator André Jacque  
December 18, 2019*

Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you in support of Senate Bill 584. This strongly bi-partisan town reform legislation I have joined Rep. Quinn in bringing forward will make a number of largely technical changes that will allow town government to work more efficiently and save taxpayer dollars. The measures within this legislation include common sense modifications to the way town board vacancies are filled; public notice requirements for governmental meetings; appointment and removal procedures for certain town officeholders; a process for an applicant to appeal a permit denial to the governing body of a city, village, or town; wages paid to an elected town officer who also serves as a town employee and the term of appointed town assessors.

Under certain circumstances, current law prevents towns from taking steps that are available to villages to replace town board members or take other actions in unusual situations. These situations include allowing for appointment of a temporary board member resulting from health concerns; and allowing the board to remove a board member, clerk, treasurer, or combined clerk-treasurer for cause. Senate Bill 584 creates parity for towns and villages in these procedures.

The bill also adjusts the timeline for towns moving to an appointed clerk/treasurer and allows an appeal process for temporary use permit applications denied by the chief of a fire district.

These technical adjustments are needed to create parity between towns and other governmental units, and to give towns the flexibility they need to effectively conduct business. The Wisconsin Towns Association strongly supports this proposal and has discussed its contents with town officials across the state during district meetings earlier this year.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 584.



# Romaine Quinn

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 75th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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December 18, 2020

Chairman Jacque and members of the Committee:

Senate Bill 584 is a general cleanup bill, with the intention of creating parity between towns and other municipalities in relation to various procedures of filling vacant posts and other errata that have come to our attention. We all want to make sure that our local civic leaders are able to expeditiously and effectively carry out their functions, and this bill accomplishes that goal.

Because there are a number of changes being made, I will address a few that I consider of perhaps most interest to you, and will welcome any questions:

One issue of parity is the ability of a town to remove a board member, clerk, treasurer, or combined clerk-treasurer for cause. Currently, Wis. Stat. §17.13(2) creates the removal procedure for villages. It states “Any elective village officer by a majority vote of all the members of the village board, because of continued physical inability to perform the duties of office or gross neglect of duty.”

Similarly, Wis. Stat. §61.23(1) allows for temporary replacement of a village trustee if “a trustee is temporarily incapacitated because of physical or mental disability, the board may appoint a person to discharge the trustee’s duties until the disability is removed.”

Unfortunately, no such similar provisions exist in state statute for towns to accomplish these functions. SB 584 corrects these and similar oversights.

Again, I welcome any questions and will be happy to discuss any of the measures contained in the bill. Thank you.