



# DUEY STROEBEL

STATE SENATOR • 20<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

## Testimony on Senate Bill 52

*March 11, 2021*

Thank you Chair Bernier and members of the Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform and Ethics for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 52. The bill represents a common sense, good government reform designed to improve public awareness and encourage citizen participation in local government.

Under current law, an incumbent local elected official who seeks reelection is required to file a declaration of candidacy with the office of record (i.e., the local clerk's office) within a specified timeframe. On the other hand, an incumbent local elected official who *does not* plan to seek reelection is supposed to file a notification of non-candidacy with the local clerk's office within a specified timeframe. Under both scenarios, there is no requirement for the local clerk's office to provide public notice of the opening of a seat for a local governing body.

SB 52 seeks to improve public awareness of open seat elections at the local level by requiring the local clerk's office to provide public notice of non-candidacy filings in accordance with the state's legal notice law.

Wisconsin's spring local government elections usually feature lower turnout and less media coverage on the candidates who are vying for open seats compared to their fall equivalents. This reality makes it all the more imperative that we advance sensible reforms to improve public knowledge and provide opportunities for citizens to engage with our system of government. SB 52 is one such reform.

This bill passed this committee last session on a 5-0 vote, with the Assembly companion bill passing that chamber.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I would welcome any questions from the committee.



---

# TIMOTHY RAMTHUN

---

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

03/11/2021

## **Testimony on Senate Bill 52, Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform, and Ethics**

Madam Chair and Members of the Senate Committee on Elections, Election Process Reform, and Ethics,

Thank you for holding a public hearing today and allowing me to testify in favor of Senate Bill 52, which seeks to require public notice of noncandidacy for incumbent local elected officials.

This bill is a reintroduction of Senate Bill 741 from last session, which passed this committee by unanimous vote but failed to receive a floor vote.

In any election, if the incumbent files with the office of record a notification of non-candidacy or fails to file a notification of candidacy by a certain deadline, the seat is considered 'open'. Under current law, there is no requirement for the office of record to provide public notice of an open seat for county and local elections, only state elections. Senate Bill 52 will bring local-level non-candidacy notices in line with state-level requirements.

This bill would require any office of record for non-state elections (school board, local, county, etc.) to provide public notice of an open seat election via an Internet posting on their website. If the office of record does not have a website, they must provide a posting in three public areas, the same as current open meetings law requirements.

This notice would increase public awareness of an open seat that might otherwise go unnoticed. In addition, many individuals might be interested in public service, while also not wanting to run against an incumbent. With a public notice of an open seat, those individuals will have the chance to reevaluate their desire to run in light of an incumbent leaving office.

Senate Bill 52 will boost public awareness of open seat elections at the local and county level, allowing for people to engage in our system of government in ways they otherwise might not.

Thank you again for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 52 and allowing me to testify in favor of it. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.