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# AMY BINSFELD

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 27<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## *Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Campaign and Elections*

*Representative Amy Binsfeld*

*October 3, 2023*

Good Morning Chair Krug and members of the Committee of Campaigns and Elections.

Thank you for hearing my testimony on AB396 with regard to the cost of the official voter registration list. This list provides state wide names of the current eligible and ineligible voters. This is a list of the people and should be transparently seen by them.

Currently, we charge differently with regard to what amount of the total list is being requested. The minimum today is at \$30 and the maximum for a complete list is \$12,500. Now I understand the cost of paper and printing as well as time spent, but with today's technology these lists should be able to be sent electronically in mere seconds with the a few computer key strokes.

AB396 provides those key strokes to be charged to the requester but at a reasonable fee of no more than \$250. I have spoken to different voters in the past months and many explain that they have paid \$35 or \$50 for partial lists from their local areas. They felt it is a transparent process, but why such a high fee for a total report to be sent electronically? In fact, wouldn't we save time in allowing the full report to be sent at \$250 rather than smaller lists? AB396 does still allow for those smaller lists at reduced fees to go out without change.

In looking at other states across the county, we are the 4<sup>th</sup> highest. Eleven states don't charge at all for the lists, while others range from \$2 in the District of Columbia to \$37,000 in Alabama. Looking directly at our neighbor states we will see that Minnesota charges \$51, Illinois charges \$500, and Michigan charges \$23.

As we consider wanting to make sure that our voters here in Wisconsin feel the elections are true and transparent we can consider the mosaic art featured in our own capitol rotunda. When you look at the Liberty mosaic also consider the meaning. She features a dual color green dress which stands for youth and hope. Her right hand is by the clear ballot box. Yes, clear. Thus providing us with guidance that we need transparency in our elections in order to continue to provide our youth with the hope of the future.

Citizen participation is necessary to keep updated voter rolls. Our statues use bottom up type of reporting for address, and voter changes. Accessibility will add to voter confidence, and be part of maintaining accurate voter information.

Thank you for your consideration on AB396 and I'm happy to answer any questions.



WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

**DAN KNODL**

STATE SENATOR • 8<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

**Assembly Bill 396**

Public Testimony

Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

October 3, 2023

Thank you Chairman Krug and members of the committee for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 396.

Assembly Bill 396 lowers our state's embarrassingly high fee for citizens to receive a copy of Wisconsin's voter registration list. Currently, the Wisconsin Elections Commission charges \$12,500 to receive a copy of the voter list. Not only is this beyond the reach of just about any citizen in the state, but it also is only a one-time snapshot of the voter list. Anyone doing serious work in voter engagement would need to update the list periodically, compounding the high cost of doing such work in Wisconsin.

Our bill reduces this fee to a maximum of \$250. We find this to be a reasonable option in line with the fees charged by other states, including our neighbors. Statewide requests among our neighboring states range from \$46 in Minnesota to \$1,500 in Iowa, with Illinois in the middle at \$500.

Under state statute, this information may only be used for non-commercial purposes. State law protects the privacy of voters by keeping much of its data confidential, including the voter's date of birth, driver's license number, and social security number. The fact that many states continue to preserve low fees for accessing this data is evidence that this has worked in other states.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposed legislation. I would like to also thank Representative Binsfeld for her work on this bill. Feel free to reach out to my office with any questions related to the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

There are two points I would like to make: the high cost of data, and the surprising nature of digital systems themselves.

First, the high cost of WEC databases, and other public records, inhibits citizen oversight. That citizens have a right to oversee their own government, constitutionally of, by, and for the people, is not a matter of dispute. The fact that high prices inhibit oversight is also indisputable. The larger question is whether a high cost might have been intentionally imposed, for the purpose of inhibiting oversight. Whether intentional or not, corrective action must be taken.

WEC, as an agency of government, receives millions of dollars in resources from Wisconsin Citizens, therefore, there should be no cost whatsoever to furnish citizens with information that was originally intended to be freely and publically available.

My second point deals with the fundamentals of Digital Technology itself.

I am retired following a thirty year career in IT Administration. In that period of time I have become aware of a very interesting phenomenon, a separation between two groups of people, the powerful few and the powerless many. The few, who hold the "Keys to the kingdom," and everyone else, who do not.

"Keys to the Kingdom," a figure of speech which describes great power held by a small group, who alone possess controlling authority over incredibly powerful and mind-numbingly complex digital systems. They have exclusive, plenary power to dictate security, to decide policy, and to determine, in recent cases without recourse, who are allowed access, and who are not.

Ah, but you say, there are regulations and government policies disallowing such divisions of power. I suggest that was true initially. It is no longer true, and has not been true in the real world for at least a decade. Indeed, the situation is growing rapidly worse, that is, divisions of power are rapidly accelerating. Rules and regulations are being flouted, evaded, and simply ignored.

In the case of government, this has created an unacceptable transfer of power that favors corrupt, powerful, and oversized government, and which has occurred at the expense of the governed, despite their protestations. This division of

power has now reached such a level, such a disparity, that it has become constitutionally untenable, yet many are not aware.

In the special case of administering our elections, government agencies – unelected bureaucracies – have created a uniquely dangerous set of problems caused by a lopsided division of power never intended by the founders.

If the public have access, that is said to be a great benefit. But actual control over Digital Technology is reserved to the very few. Those few are happy indeed with the current state of affairs, because it has made them exceedingly powerful.

For the general public, access is not enough. Those who manage powerful digital systems must be held accountable to the people, especially in the case of government systems, and most especially when those systems are being used to decide election outcomes.

Elections are not the only issue. Recently there has been a report of WEC data, including names, addresses, drivers' license numbers, and partial social security numbers, being transmitted to China. That is unacceptable.

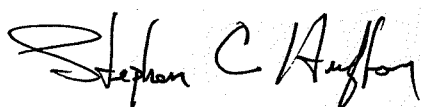
The government frequently audits the private sector. Just one agency, the IRS, audits private individuals, organizations, and companies at will. When will the private sector meaningfully audit government? When elections are compromised, what other mechanism exists to meaningfully hold government to account?

Ladies and Gentlemen; Representatives of The People: When shall we have true accountability?

Action Points:

1. To incentivize oversight, eliminate the cost of procuring public data.
2. To once again level the playing field, break up establishments of power, government and otherwise, digital and otherwise.
3. To return trust to government, and to our elections, initiate an ongoing program of full financial, forensic and cyber audits, conducted by qualified private sector citizens and organizations.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen C. Auffman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.