



WISCONSIN STATE SENATE
DAN KNODL
STATE SENATOR • 8TH DISTRICT

Senate Bill 397
Public Testimony
Senate Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections, and Consumer Protection
November 8, 2023

Thank you, members of this committee, for hearing my testimony on Senate Bill 397.

Senate Bill 397 is very simple—it 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.

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 transparency has worked in other states.

I would like to thank Representative Binsfeld for her work on this bill. Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposed legislation. We would be happy to answer any questions.

AMY BINSFELD

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 27TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections, and Consumer Protection

Representative Amy Binsfeld

November 8, 2023

Good Morning Chair Knodl and members of the Committee on Shared Revenue, Elections, and Consumer Protection:

Thank you for hearing my testimony on SB397 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.

SB397 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? SB397 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 4th 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 SB397 and I'm happy to answer any questions.