



May 6, 2011

Sen. Alberta Darling
Rep. Robin Vos
Co-Chairs
Wisconsin State Legislature
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 305 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

RE: Assembly Substitute Amendment 1 to 2011 Assembly Bill 7, with references to Senate Bill 6 and amendments

Dear Senator Darling, Representative Vos and Committee Members:

The Wisconsin legislature is considering passing the most restrictive—and discriminatory—voter ID law in the United States. Only three states in the country require voters to present photo ID, without exception or alternative: Georgia, Indiana and, as of last month, Kansas. Assembly Bill 7 seeks to make Wisconsin Number Four but, in reality, Wisconsin will become Number One with the most restrictive voter ID bill in America. Georgia allows voters to use expired driver’s licenses, any form of federal photo ID, and any form of state or local photo ID. Wisconsin’s proposed law will not. Indiana allows any form of photo ID issued by the federal or state government. If AB 7 passes, Wisconsin will not. Even the new photo ID law in Kansas permits the use of driver’s licenses or state ID cards issued by Kansas or another state, Kansas student ID cards, and public assistance ID cards, as long as they contain a name and a photo.¹ Wisconsin’s will not. We have previously registered objections to this bill; this letter supplements those concerns.

Although Substitute Amendment 1 to AB 7 allows the use of student ID cards for identification at the polls, this concession to the youngest members of our democracy—including approximately 182,000 students in the University of Wisconsin system and tens of thousands of students in Wisconsin private colleges and universities—is completely illusory. Under the current bill, a valid student ID must contain “the date of birth, current address, and signature of the individual to whom it was issued,” as well as an expiration

¹ Certain Wisconsin lawmakers have just begun raising a proposal to require that photos be included on every FoodShare Quest card and BadgerCare Plus Forward card *precisely as a fraud prevention measure*. Since it would be arbitrary and unreasonable not to include these fraud prevention cards as eligible forms of *voter* identification, the legislature should delay further action on voter ID until the issue of photos in public assistance cards is resolved.

date. As Kevin J. Kennedy, the Director and General Counsel of the Government Accountability Board, stated frankly in his letter to Rep. Tauchen dated May 3, 2011, no student ID card in Wisconsin meets these requirements.

Nor is it likely that the cards can be changed and reissued to conform to this requirement. Student addresses are not included on student ID cards for a reason. On many campuses, the ID cards also serve as keycards that may be swiped to gain access to student housing. If a criminal or predator were to find a stolen or lost student ID card with a photo and an address on it, that individual would be able to locate his target on campus and gain access to his or her building. Even if the loss happened to be discovered right away—something that would not always occur—and the university had the capacity to immediately disable the lost or stolen ID card's magnetic strip, a student ID card with an address gives criminals or stalkers easy information as to a particular student's residence. Thus, mandating that a student ID card contain an address would force universities to choose between maximizing student safety and protecting students' voting rights. Ironically, AB 7 exempts from the photo ID requirement any person whose address is confidential as a result of sexual assault or stalking, the very crimes college administrators seek to guard against by omitting addresses from student IDs.

Combining the illusory inclusion of student ID with the refusal to allow the use of dormitory lists as proof of residence will only further result in the suppression of the votes of young voters—those whom the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was designed to protect. There is no evidence whatsoever that checking a certified dorm list and verifying student IDs has been insufficient to ensure eligibility. Yet AB 7 seeks to eliminate the longstanding and successful use of certified dorm lists.

In addition, the cost of implementing these changes—which would, among other things, require universities to redesign ID cards, change procedures and reissue student ID cards annually as students move—would be substantial.²

The bill also undermines the absentee balloting process by requiring absentee voters to mail in a copy of an accepted photo ID with their absentee ballot applications. This is exceptionally burdensome for senior citizens and persons with disabilities who live on their own in the community, rather than in facilities such as nursing or retirement homes. The law will require these voters to either send original identification documents with their ballots—a rule that clearly presents significant logistical and security concerns—or obtain access to a photocopy machine to make a copy of the relevant

² Even without the costs of annually replacing student ID cards, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau estimated the cost of this bill at \$2.7 million in lost revenue to supply free identification cards, \$61,680 in new systems for the Department of Transportation to issue free IDs, and \$2.1 million in public education and training costs. And these figures likely underestimate the total price tag. Missouri estimates that a new voter ID law will cost the state more than \$20 million over the next three years. The Institute for Southern Studies estimated it could cost North Carolina \$14 million or more over three years to educate voters about that state's proposed photo ID law.

document.³ But countless seniors and persons with disabilities, especially those living in areas not served by public transportation, lack easy or meaningful access to copy machines. As a consequence of this new rule, many people who rely on absentee balloting to participate in elections will simply give up.

Finally, the in-person absentee voting period, which has effectively increased participation and significantly reduced Election-Day congestion in Wisconsin, will also be cut down to a mere 5 days, Monday through Friday in the week preceding Election Day. This reduction will severely limit participation in the electoral process.

For these reasons and the reasons set forth in our prior testimony, we urge the legislature to reconsider and reject SB 6/AB 7 and the proposed amendments in their entirety.

Sincerely,

/s/ Renee Shavers

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Cc: The Honorable Gary Tauchen, Chair
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³ Further, as prior testimony has discussed, many senior citizens and persons with disabilities lack approved forms of identification.