



ACLU of WI Continues to Urge GAB for Privacy Protections in Release of Public Documents

Searchable Databases Must Not Include Confidential Information

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MADISON, WI – Today the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin reiterated its position on the privacy rights of survivors of domestic violence in the release of petitions to recall Governor Walker and Lt. Governor Kleefisch. In a letter to the Government Accountability Board and to state Attorney General J. B. Van Hollen, the ACLU of Wisconsin asked for privacy rights of confidential electors be extended to any searchable database that may be available to the public.

The ACLU of Wisconsin wrote that state law protects the privacy rights of confidential electors in other public documents such as the election poll lists. Those same protections should be extended to other electoral public documents such as the recall petitions. Confidential electors should not have to surrender their free speech and assembly rights to participate in their democracy.

While scanned PDF copies of recall petitions are easy to access but difficult to search, a database of petition signers makes identifying individual names and addresses very easy to find. In this case, survivors of domestic violence and targets of stalking have a clear public safety interest in having their information redacted from a searchable database. Similarly, it should be easy to redact the information of confidential electors from a database as opposed to hard copies of over a million petition signatures.

The ACLU of Wisconsin continues to urge the GAB to appropriately balance the competing public interests of electoral integrity and transparency and political speech and association by redacting the information of confidential electors from any electronic datafile before it is disclosed as a public record. Further, the ACLU of Wisconsin urges the GAB to refuse any cross-checking of data with other government agencies.

We understand that the GAB has received a variety of questions and complaints from Wisconsinites on a variety of data privacy concerns. After the news media broke the news on Tuesday night that the PDF documents were available online, the GAB's public voicemail boxes were full and people were unable to leave a message with their concerns. We hope that the GAB will provide a process to hear the privacy concerns of Wisconsinites before constructing a

searchable database and at the minimum, shield the information of the confidential electors who already receive privacy protections under state law.

If there are confidential electors who are concerned about the disclosure of their information in the release of recall petition documents or electronic datafiles, they can share their stories with the ACLU of Wisconsin: <http://aclu-wi.org/Legal/FileComplaint.html>

The ACLU of Wisconsin has approximately 6,500 members who support its efforts to defend the civil liberties and civil rights of all Wisconsin residents. For more on the work of the ACLU of Wisconsin, visit our [webpage](#), like us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on Twitter [@ACLUofWisconsin](#) and [@ACLUMadison](#). Read more news and opinion on civil liberties in Wisconsin on the [Forward for Liberty](#) blog.

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