



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN EDUCATION NETWORK

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To: Senate Committee on Transportation and Elections

Re: Opposition to SB 292 and SB 367

Senate Bill 292

The League of Women Voters supports methods of financing political campaigns that ensure the public's right to know and promote citizen participation in the political process. We believe voters have a right to know who is funding candidates' campaigns. Indeed, successful democracy demands an informed electorate.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin opposes SB 292 because it removes a basic component of the disclosure of a candidate's sources of funds. With the dramatically increased role of special interests in our elections, it is more important than ever to require donors of larger contributions to disclose their principal place of employment. It is the only way to track indirect corporate support, as when a company has issued "bonuses" to employees so they could make contributions. When 10 executives from one company give contributions to one candidate, voters deserve to know about it.

Requiring disclosure of a contributor's principal place of employment places no burden on the contributor beyond the seconds it might take to provide the information, and it is not an obstacle to a contributor's right to give. The benefits to voters clearly outweigh the minimal burden on contributors, and we urge you oppose this bill.

Senate Bill 367

The League also opposes SB 367, which would criminalize behavior that may be unintentional or may represent an effort by a voter to ensure his/her signature is counted. In today's complex political environment with nomination papers, recall petitions and advocacy petitions being circulated seemingly year-round, many people might not remember whether they have already signed a particular petition, or they might be confused as to which petition they signed. There have also been allegations of people destroying petitions that already had signatures on them. A person may be concerned their signature was lost that way or that it might not get counted because the circulator was an imposter; if so, they should have the right to sign again.

The right of the people to recall an elected state official is protected by the Wisconsin Constitution. Indeed, a consequence of being elected to state office is that you could be the subject of a recall effort. Appropriately, the recall process is a rare occurrence because it requires a very large number of signatures. Opponents of a recall have the right to review those signatures with a fine tooth comb and challenge their validity.

Duplicate names are at most a nuisance, and they are very easily sorted out. Both campaigns have an incentive not to have duplicate names. This bill would give benefit to the one being challenged, at the possible expense of the citizen's right to participate. There is no need to criminalize behavior that occurs very infrequently and causes no harm. We urge you to oppose SB 367.