



## WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

### Defending Democracy: Bipartisan Push for Election Confidence and Perception in Wisconsin

By Representatives Lee Snodgrass and Scott Krug

In a state with a deeply divided government, we're no strangers to partisan disagreements. It's unusual and, apparently newsworthy when two Representatives from opposite sides of the aisle agree on an issue as talked about as election security. But that's what's happening.

When we first met as chair and as ranking member of the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections, we both committed to sticking to facts and prioritizing the voices of those who are front lines in ensuring Wisconsin's elections are secure, accurate and fair—namely our municipal and county clerks. While we may have diverging opinions on some of the details, we both agree that Wisconsin elections have had a perception problem, not a fraud problem.

With the 2024 Election looming ahead, it's important to help voters separate fact from fiction and remind Wisconsinites that our elections are secure and accurate and that their vote will be counted whether in person on Election Day or early by absentee ballot. The results of the 2020 election have withstood recounts, multiple state and federal lawsuits, an audit by the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau and a review by a conservative law firm. Probes into Wisconsin's elections yielded no evidence of widespread fraud. On that, we can agree. We also agree that in spite of the evidence, doubt continues to linger about our elections process.

This is why we pushed so hard to ensure that Wisconsin could join the 39 states that allow ballot processing prior to Election Day. The simple fact is that, with so many people continuing to opt to vote early by absentee ballot, we'll continue to see large volumes of people voting before Election Day. Processing these ballots takes time, precisely because of the checks and balances in place that protect the security and integrity of our elections. Clerks compare the signature on the outside of the return envelope with the voter's signature on record to ensure a match. Once that is verified the envelope is opened and the ballot is prepared for tabulation by removing it from the envelope, flattening it and stacking it with other ballots. Ballots are not left unattended to sit out for any amount of time. They are fed into the machine. If you talk to your clerks you'll know this process does not "count" votes. It records the ballot in the internal memory and secures it safely in the machine behind layers of security seals. Any efforts to access these internal secure areas are tracked by audit logs on the machine. No results are tallied until polls close but the additional time for processing makes sure that the late night results—what many perceived as a suspicious "ballot dump" does not happen. Results are timely and trusted.



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AB 567 would allow this ballot process to begin the Monday before Election Day. The bill was Republican authored, crafted by Democrats and Republicans, passed out of committee and out of the Assembly floor with bi-partisan votes. It even had the support of the Republican Speaker and the Democratic Governor. In Wisconsin, it doesn't get any better than that. If the State Senate does not choose to take up the bill this March in their remaining session days, it will die an unfortunate death this legislative session.

We both are committed to ensuring that the voters of Wisconsin feel confident in the security and outcome of our elections. We hear from clerks every week, Republicans and Democrats from small towns and large cities who are all equally committed to ensuring the integrity of the process and the accuracy of the results. And we also know that for many, perception is reality and regardless of what actually happens, how we perceive things becomes our reality. The voter deserves the confidence that comes from perception matching reality. We remain hopeful that our colleagues in the Senate will respect the people of Wisconsin and join us in providing the time our clerks need to efficiently manage workflow without the undue pressure of a needlessly unrealistic time frame. Together we uphold the integrity of our electoral process and work to ensure all voters have confidence in that process. Democracy is defended and deserved by all.

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