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Update: Senate Elections Committee Hearing Wednesday morning on Voting Bills

The Senate Elections Committee is holding a public hearing this Wednesday morning May 5th at 9:30 AM. The hearing includes four bills that will make it harder for many people with disabilities, older adults, and others to vote. The bills are SB 203, SB 206, SB 209, and SB 212. The bills could:

- Make it harder to vote absentee for many voters, including voters with a disability and older adults.
- Make it more difficult for friends and neighbors to assist you with returning an absentee ballot.
- Put volunteers, clerks, and others at risk for prosecution for violating the new restrictions.

Hearing Information

[Senate Elections Committee](#) Hearing: Wednesday May 5th at 9:30 AM
Senator Berner, Chair

- Hearing Notice: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/raw/cid/1614189>

How to Share Your Concerns

It is very important to share your concerns with committee members and with your legislators. Here are options for participating:

- **Speak at the May 5th hearing in person or remotely.** If you want to testify remotely, contact the office of the Committee Chair, Senator Bernier, in advance, to let them know you want to testify remotely. State which bills you want to testify about and your position (opposed, in favor, or for information).
 - **Email:** Sen.Bernier@legis.wisconsin.gov
 - **Telephone:** (608) 266-7511
- **Submit written comments to the Committee Clerk at Nathan.Duerkop@legis.wisconsin.gov** and ask that they be shared with committee members and included as part of the public record. It is also helpful to send your comments to all Committee members:
 - Sen.Bernier@legis.wisconsin.gov
 - Sen.Darling@legis.wisconsin.gov
 - Sen.Stroebe@legis.wisconsin.gov
 - Sen.Smith@legis.wisconsin.gov
 - Sen.Roys@legis.wisconsin.gov
- **Contact your legislators to share your concerns about the bills.** The full legislature may vote on them as soon as next week. Find contact information for your legislators by entering your address in "Who Are My Legislators" at this link: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>.
- If your agency is registered for lobbying, register your position on the bills on Eye on Lobbying and post your testimony.
- Please let me know via email if you plan to testify either virtually or by submitting comments.
 - **Email:** barbara.beckert@drwi.org

Sample testimony

[Your Name and a brief introduction about yourself (where you live, volunteer, work, etc.)]

I am concerned about the following bills (list the bill numbers) because they will make it harder for me (or people I care about) to vote.

[Tell your story: talk about how these bills will personally make it harder for you or someone you know to vote.]

As an American, few things are more important to me than my right to vote and ensuring all people, including people with disabilities, have that same opportunity. Please vote to support accessible and inclusive elections.

Sincerely,

[Your Name and address]

Summary of Voting Bills for May 5th Senate Hearing

SB 203 / AB 192: Secure delivery of absentee ballots

- Would limit options to obtain and return absentee ballots.
- Prohibits any individual from helping more than one non-family member to return their absentee ballot.
- Limits who can return a voter's absentee ballot to the voter's immediate family or legal guardian, with very limited exceptions.

SB 206 / AB 180: Returning Absentee Indefinitely Confined Voter

- Would limit rights of voters who certify as "indefinitely confined".
- Voters would be required to provide statements under oath.
- Voters under 65 would need to have their statements signed by their doctors. A false statement would be a felony.

- Voters would need to renew their status every two years. Currently, they receive an absentee ballot for every election for as long needed.

SB 209 / AB 177: Returning Absentee ballots to the office of the clerk

- Will limit drop boxes for absentee ballots to a drop box authorized by the municipal clerk that is attached to a building where the municipal clerk's office is permanently located. Prohibits the use of any other drop box for the delivery of an absentee ballot.
- Requires drop boxes to be tamper-resistant and moisture-resistant, satisfy the accessibility requirements under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, and be emptied once each day at 9 AM by the clerk or deputy clerk in public view.
- Requires the clerk to publish notice of the location of the drop box and the days on which it is available for receiving absentee ballots.

SB 212 / AB 198: Defects on Absentee Ballot Certificates

- Prohibits a municipal clerk from correcting a defect on the completed absentee ballot certificate envelope.
 - Example:** *A witness for your absentee ballot forgets to complete their address. Currently the clerk may look up the address or contact the voter for information.*
- If there is a defect on the absentee ballot certificate envelope, the clerk must return the ballot to the voter and post a notification on the elector's voter information page on MyVote website.
- Concerns:
 - Many voters don't have internet or device to access MyVote; they would be unaware of the problem, and not able to correct it.
 - Mail is slow. There may not be time to return the ballot to the voter and for the voter to send it back by the deadline.