

Green Bay Common Council votes for expanded early voting hours

Written by Wisconsin Conservation Voters Press
Wednesday, 29 June 2022 14:05 -



Conservation Voters calls it a triumph for voting freedoms.

GREEN BAY – At last night’s public hearing, Green Bay’s Common Council chose to expand its residents’ freedom to vote by voting for expanded early voting hours.

This has been a long time concern of local residents and students. In 2016, students at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay began calling for expanded early voting hours and continued to advocate up to yesterday’s vote. The combined organizing efforts of students, labor, disability advocates, Wisconsin Conservation Voters members, and many others – along with the support of Green Bay Clerk Celestine Jeffreys – led to yesterday’s success by a unanimous vote among the city council.

Early voting has been shown to reduce long lines at polling locations, improve accessibility to the ballot box, reduce burdens on elected officials, and much more. Early voting benefits all voters, regardless of party affiliation.

“For years, Wisconsin Conservation Voters has been working hand in hand with activists, community members, and voters to expand early voting in the City of Green Bay,” said Organizing Director and Green Bay resident Casey Hicks. “Today we celebrate this decision to protect our freedom to vote by expanding early voting access and continuing to ensure all

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Green Bay residents have equal access to cast their vote.”

This vote has particular ramifications for people with disabilities and the elderly. According to Josh Theis, Executive Director of Options for Independent Living, "Many people we work with at Options for Independent Living – people with disabilities and older adults – rely on caregivers, family members, or friends to get them to the polls. These voters have limited options for voting because they are often reliant on their caregivers' schedules, have physical challenges that prevent them from waiting in long lines, or have health risks in crowded places. Increasing early voting hours will give them more opportunities to vote.”

Natalie Hoffman, Green Bay resident and UW-Green Bay graduate, said, "As a democratic institution, our local government must do everything in its power to preserve our democracy and ensure that every single person can make their voice heard in our local elections. The best way to do this is by expanding voting access.”

According to Steve McFarlane, President of the Greater Green Bay Labor Council, “Our union members include a variety of workers, many of whom will benefit from expanded voting hours in Green Bay. That includes members who work swing shifts, those with forced overtime, and many who travel out of their city to work on our roads and infrastructure. A typical working person's shift does not follow a “nine to five.” If we want people to participate – and for citizens to vote – we need to provide more flexibility to voters.”

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