http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/voter-us-elections-s5.jpg



More than 200,000 voters threatened with unlawful removal.

MADISON – On Friday, November 22, the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin asked an Ozaukee County judge to allow it to join an existing lawsuit as an intervening defendant to prevent thousands of voters from being unlawfully purged from the state voter rolls. Wisconsin state law requires voter purges to be based on “reliable information” that voters have moved. However, due to many factors with how the state gathers voter information, some voter roll maintenance is based on flawed, unreliable information, meaning many voters could find their registration revoked even if they have not moved outside their municipality.

“Maintaining accurate voter rolls is an important part of our elections, but it must be based on accurate information,” said Erin Grunze, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin. “Current methods put thousands of legitimate voter registrations at risk, and a purge right now would amount to voter suppression.”

The first time Wisconsin used this flawed data to purge voter rolls was in the 2017-2018 election cycle. As a result, three cities, including Milwaukee, reversed the purge entirely because so many errors were present in the data. New letters were sent to 234,000 registered voters in October 2019, which accounts for 7% of Wisconsin’s 3.3 million registered voters. The League is represented by Jon Sherman and Cecilia Aguilera at Fair Elections Center and Doug Poland at Rathje Woodward LLC.

“Wisconsin law is clear; a registered voter can only be removed based on ‘reliable information’ of a residential address change,” said Jon Sherman, Senior Counsel at Fair Elections Center. “A 7% error rate would be ludicrous and unacceptable in a calculator or a smoke detector; it cannot possibly be considered reliable when it comes to the most fundamental right in a democracy.”

The three plaintiffs – voters from Washington, Ozaukee, and Waukesha Counties – have asked the Ozaukee County Circuit Court to enter a temporary injunction that would require the Wisconsin Elections Commission to deactivate the registrations of 234,000 voters from around Wisconsin if they do not respond within 30 days to notices sent by the Elections Commission in October confirming that they currently live at the address where they are registered to vote. The Elections Commission last spring determined that because inaccuracies in voter address information provided by the Wisconsin DMV caused voters to be left off the poll book, it would implement a 12-24 month-long process to confirm that those voters have not moved so their registrations are not mistakenly removed. The court has scheduled a hearing on the temporary injunction motion for December 5. The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin has asked the court to order that it may join the case and participate in the December 5 hearing.

Key legal documents filed by the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin can be found here .

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The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin is a nonpartisan political organization that advocates for informed and active participation in government. There are 20 local Leagues throughout Wisconsin. More information at lwvwi.org .

The Fair Elections Center is a national nonpartisan voting rights and election reform 501c3 organization based in Washington DC whose mission is to use litigation and advocacy to remove barriers to registration and voting, particularly those disenfranchising underrepresented and marginalized communities, and to improve election administration.

Doug Poland is an attorney at Rathje Woodward LLC with 25 years of experience in complex litigation. Mr. Poland served as lead trial counsel for plaintiffs who successfully challenged the

Wisconsin Assembly legislative districts before three-judge federal court panels in 2012 and 2016, and is one of the members of the legal team that represented the respondents before the U.S. Supreme Court in Gill v. Whitford.