

Funding Elections Commission Staff Ensures Secure and Efficient Elections

Written by Jon Erpenbach Press. State Senator 27th District

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Representative Melissa Sargent and Senator Jon Erpenbach explain how important it is to override Governor Walker's veto of Wisconsin Election Commission staff.

MADISON - To make our elections run securely and accurately, we need to repair the damage to the Wisconsin Elections Commission caused by Governor Walker's veto last month, which removed five necessary staff from the Commission.

The simple reality is when government staff positions are eliminated, the services provided by those staff are also eliminated. Whether it is a snowplow driver, daycare license compliance officer, professor, veterans home nurse assistant, or an elections specialist, cuts to staffing or funding cause services to suffer. The Wisconsin Elections Commission has been at the receiving end of many staffing cuts, and with Governor Walker's veto of five additional staff provided by the Legislature in the budget, our election system will simply not function as we need it to.



Our Elections Commission staff investigate complaints of fraud and misconduct in elections, but they are also in charge of the integrity and security of our elections systems. Among their many responsibilities, the Elections Commission is charged with communicating with and training our local election officials. We have a unique system for elections in Wisconsin: they are run from the local level with 1,853 municipal election clerks and 72 county clerks, and even though we have a statewide voter list, it is the partnership between our local and state election officials that truly makes sure our elections are secure and accurate. The Elections Commission provides all

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of these local officials need to know every change to the law that impacts elections, and trains these local officials on the process, laws, technology, court decisions and security of our elections.



Governor Walker issued his veto of the staff and told the Wisconsin Elections Commission to hire limited-term employees and contract employees. The Elections Commission will undoubtedly do everything in their power to “make it work” and come back to Legislature to request funding for staff in the next budget, but that doesn’t do much to ensure the integrity or security of our elections in the meantime. The Wisconsin Elections Commission should have the minimum staff they say they need to effectively and securely run elections in Wisconsin.

That is why we are co-authoring a bill restoring five full-time staff members to the Elections Commission—back to where the Commission was before Governor Walker’s veto—a provision that Republicans voted for in committee and on the floor of the Legislature. Yet, most Republicans did not sign onto this legislation despite supporting it mere months ago. We should at least restore the Elections Commission staff to the level provided for in the Legislature’s budget, which ensures election integrity and security in Wisconsin.

Written by Senator Jon Erpenbach, 27th Senate District, and Representative Sargent, 48th Assembly District