



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

August 10, 2021

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

I am vetoing Senate Bill 203 in its entirety.

This bill would create new requirements for how a municipality can conduct an election event where people return completed ballots and also would restrict who could deliver an absentee ballot on behalf of another voter.

I am vetoing this bill because I object to the limitations it places on municipalities that conduct absentee ballot collection events. In 2020, these innovative events allowed poll workers to answer questions about voting and registration, and to help registered voters return their ballots properly during the coronavirus pandemic. These events were helpful to our local governments and our voters, ensuring people had the opportunity to verify that their absentee ballots were completed properly before returning. While I appreciate that the bill attempts to codify a procedure for holding such an event, I do not approve of the way this bill would prevent municipalities from offering other important voter services and restrict the timeline during which the events could be held.

I also object to the additional restrictions regarding who may return a ballot on behalf of a voter. This bill would require that a person who cannot return their absentee ballot on their own either use one of a short list of approved relatives or guardians or designate another person in writing. Any person helping to return ballots would be limited to returning only two ballots, and they would have to be a registered voter in Wisconsin. These unnecessary restrictions would significantly reduce the circle of people who a confined voter could turn to for help with absentee voting. For example, the bill would not allow a 16-year-old grandchild to help their grandmother return her ballot simply because the grandchild is not old enough to vote. A trusted neighbor would be limited to helping only two elderly or infirm neighbors return their ballots, but not a third. Furthermore, requiring a voter to write a letter designating a non-family member to return their absentee ballot is an unfair and unnecessary burden on what is likely an already vulnerable voter.

Our state laws already prohibit a person from receiving and then failing to deliver official ballots, preventing their delivery in time, and destroying or concealing the ballots. This bill adds no additional security or fraud prevention beyond what our state laws already provide. One can easily imagine the ways that the measures proposed in this bill would result in voters being deprived of their fundamental right to vote. The right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy and to restrict that right is undemocratic.

Respectfully submitted,


Tony Evers
Governor