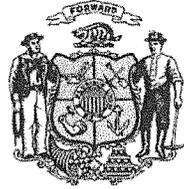


# WISCONSIN ELECTIONS COMMISSION

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September 26, 2017

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald  
Senate Majority Leader  
Room 211 South, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

The Honorable Robin Vos  
Assembly Speaker  
Room 217 West, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Subject: Wisconsin Elections Commission 2017-19 Biennial Budget

Dear Senator Fitzgerald and Speaker Vos:

We are writing to address Governor Walker's line item veto related to the 2017 – 2019 budget of the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC), which reduces the number of agency FTE positions to 25.75, as compared to the 30.75 FTE positions which were recommended by the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) and included in the final budget bill approved by the Legislature. As bipartisan appointees of the Commission, we are concerned about the impact of this staff reduction on the agency's ability to fulfill its statutory duties, especially in light of the previous elimination of four FTE positions which occurred in the 2015 – 2017 biennial budget.

As you may recall, the WEC budget request focused on the upcoming expiration of federal funds which have supported most of the election agency's staff positions for over a decade. We appreciate that the Governor proposed, and the Legislature agreed, that many of those federally-funded positions should convert to GPR positions when the federal funds are depleted.

However, as we stated during budget deliberations, the Commission requires these vetoed positions in order to carry out, in a timely fashion, its ever-increasing duties, including significant security concerns. It should not be assumed that because these positions were vacant, they are not needed. Using Commission time and resources to recruit staff during the weeks leading up to the fall election was not feasible and as the biennial budget process began, the Department of Administration directed that the positions should remain vacant. It also should not be assumed that these positions are unrelated to election security. The Commission's maintenance of WisVote, MyVote, certification of election equipment and training of clerks is for the purpose of ensuring fair and secure elections in Wisconsin.

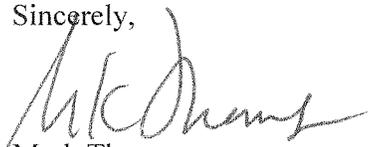
Since the JCF action which largely agreed with the WEC's assessment of its staffing needs, there has been no reduction in the responsibilities or workload of agency staff and in fact its duties continue to increase due to legislative directives and new challenges related to administering elections in Wisconsin's decentralized structure. During JCF deliberations regarding the agency budget, WEC staff was even advised to notify the

Committee in the event that it becomes apparent in the future that it is necessary to reinstate one additional staff position.

The WEC recently completed its first year in existence, and we have observed firsthand the wide variety of and substantial amount of expertise that is required of agency staff on a continuous and year-round basis. Preparing for and administering elections successfully, including the training and guidance provided to local election officials, is not a part-time task and cannot easily be achieved by relying on limited term employees or contractors. The recent development and launch of the online voter registration system, the current implementation of electronic poll books, and the many facets of election security planning are just a few examples of new projects and priorities that demand staff resources and which did not exist just a year ago.

We have directed WEC staff to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing the agency's staffing needs given the outcome of the budget process. Once completed, we will share detailed information with you about the impact of these vetoes on election administration and seek your assistance to address those impacts, including taking legislative action. The Commission and its staff look forward to working with you to ensure that Wisconsin elections continue to be fair, open, accurate and secure. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please feel free to contact Commission Chair Thomsen or Administrator Michael Haas if you have any questions or wish to discuss this issue further.

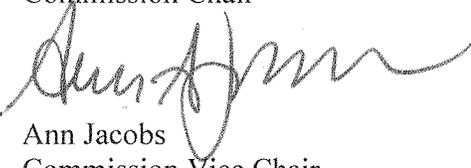
Sincerely,



Mark Thomsen  
Commission Chair



Jodi Jensen  
Commissioner



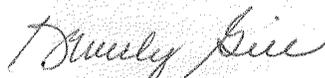
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