

Rep. Subeck: Legislation to allow Municipal Officials to serve as Election Officials passes Senate Committee on Elections and Utilities

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MADISON – Today, the Senate Committee on Elections and Utilities unanimously passed Senate Bill 66, a bill authored by Representative Lisa Subeck (D-Madison), Senator Janet Bewley (D-Ashland), and Representative Ed Brooks (R- Reedsburg) to allow municipal officials to serve as election officials. Prior to 2016, it was not unusual for members of City Councils and Village or Town Boards to serve as poll workers on Election Day. The practice was discontinued after an attorney from the League of Wisconsin Municipalities provided a legal opinion that the practice is actually prohibited under state statute.

“Here in Madison we lost four highly experienced chief polling inspectors as a result of the legal opinion that a current law prohibiting elected municipal officials from holding a second position within the municipality applied to working at the polls on Election Day,” said Representative Lisa Subeck. “SB 66 is a simple fix to state law that would again allow municipal officials to serve as election officials, as had previously been the widely accepted practice.”

Under current law, a member of a municipality’s governing body is prohibited to hold another office or position of employment within the city, village or town with three narrow exceptions. SB 66 would add serving as an election official to the list of exceptions. The bill does not remove the prohibition currently in place that

prevents an elected official from serving as an election official where his or her name is on the ballot.

The bill has received bi-partisan support in the Legislature and is supported by the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and the Wisconsin Towns Association. The Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections unanimously passed the companion bill, AB 85, earlier this year.

“It makes good sense that those who have committed themselves to local public service as municipal officials may also be called upon to keep our elections running smoothly,” said Rep. Subeck. “Today’s vote by the Senate Committee on Elections and Utilities puts us one step closer to returning municipal elected officials to their posts as some of our most knowledgeable and reliable poll workers.”

SB 66 and its Assembly Companion AB 85 are now available to be scheduled for a vote of the full Assembly and Senate.