

One Wisconsin Now: Sen. Hansen and voting rights advocates encourage early voting

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GREEN BAY, Wis. — At a media event at the Brown County Courthouse State Sen. Dave Hansen and One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross urged Northeastern Wisconsin residents to take advantage of the opportunity to vote early, in advance of the April 3 election. They also urged local governments to take advantage of the opportunity to offer expanded hours for early voting, including evening and weekend hours, and to allow early votes to be cast at satellite locations throughout the community.

“Elections are the time when everyone’s voice can be heard,” said Sen. Hansen. “And with early voting now open, you have the opportunity speak up in Green Bay and communities all over our area. Now more than ever it’s important that people get out to vote.”

One Wisconsin Now’s partner organization, One Wisconsin Institute, was the lead plaintiff in a federal lawsuit that resulted in numerous state laws restricting early voting being struck down. Early voting can now start as soon as election ballots are available and it can be offered during convenient hours for voters like in the evenings and on weekends. Under the court decision, municipalities are even allowed to offer early voting at sites throughout their community, like public libraries, and not just in their clerk’s office.

“The civic responsibility of voting is up to us,” said Ross. “But that doesn’t mean our government should have unnecessary barriers that make it more difficult to cast our ballots. We should be able to vote early, and we should be able to do so at times after business hours or on weekends and at convenient locations throughout our communities.”

According to figures from the Wisconsin Election Commission (WEC) in the 2016 election, after early voting restrictions were struck down, a record 650,808 ballots were cast early, in-person. In total, over 797,000 votes were cast in Wisconsin either early in-person or via mail-in absentee ballot according to the WEC report.

Unfortunately, efforts to expand early voting hours and locations communities in Northeastern Wisconsin where voters could benefit, like Green Bay, have been stymied. The Green Bay City Clerk has consistently resisted efforts from voting advocates to offer early voting outside of her regular business hours or at locations other than her office.

Ross concluded, “Voters vote when given the opportunity. It’s important for folks to take the opportunity now, with early voting, to make their voices heard. And it’s important that our local governments take advantage of the opportunities to help us do it by expanding early voting.”