Conservation Voters: Applaud Green Bay's efforts to expand safe and accessible voting

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GREEN BAY – Last night, the Green Bay Common Council secured more than $1 million in funding to help realize its goal of carrying out safe, accessible, and fair elections this year and in the future.

"The City of Green Bay, its council, and Mayor Eric Genrich are taking the lead in their community by building a strong foundation for a safe, fair, and accessible election," said Northeast Organizer Casey Hicks. "This funding allows Green Bay to expand and fortify its leadership role on this critical issue at the local level – where it matters most."

By securing over $1 million in grant funding from the [Center for Tech and Civic Life](#), an organization working to foster a more informed and engaged democracy, Green Bay is taking steps to ensure its elections are modern, inclusive, and safe.

"This grant will significantly improve access to the polls," Hicks said. "This grant shows that Green Bay understands the challenges it faces mounting an election during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as existing structural deficiencies that stack the deck against underserved populations within our city when it comes to fair and safe elections."

In April, a lack of state legislative leadership on COVID-19 resulted in long lines, congested polling places, and for voters to navigate an impossible dilemma: exercise their most sacred franchise, or risk contracting a dangerous and highly contagious novel virus. This grant will help progress from that low point by giving Green Bay resources it needs to take further control of its own elections.

The funding will serve the city beyond this year's election. It will set a strong precedent for how future elections are conducted in Green Bay, and show the rest of Wisconsin that Green Bay is a leader in the fight for a fair, safe, and equitable democracy.

"I have seen a lot of concern over safe voting procedures from students, as well as many requests from students and community members to expand our current voting climate to include everyone," said Guillermo Gomez, president of the Student Government Association at UW-Green Bay. "Now, I have full faith that Green Bay will become a leader in accessible voting and voter safety moving forward."

Wisconsin Conservation Voters has worked with student leaders and faculty from UW-Green Bay and community members to expand early voting on the east side of the city, as well as collaborating with the city to secure a west side location. This grant will accelerate those efforts.

The grant will address several key issues and challenges to holding safe and equitable elections:

- Reduce congestion at polling sites
- Hire bilingual "vote navigators" to help voters properly comply with voter ID and absentee ballot certification requirements
- Offer multiple methods for voters to cast their ballot
- Expand early voting
- Promote vote-by-mail
- Install secure drop-off boxes for ballots
- Purchase equipment to quickly and accurately process ballots
- Invest in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for poll workers

A recent study completed by Voting Rights Lab, Union of Concerned Scientists, and UCLA Voting Rights Project concluded that eliminating congestion on Election Day through providing multiple methods for voters to cast their ballot will lead to safer and more accessible elections.

Interview opportunities:

- Guillermo Gomez, president, Student Government Association, UW-Green Bay; guillermoffgomez@gmail.com
- Casey Hicks, northeast organizer, Wisconsin Conservation

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- Anjali Bhasin, civic engagement director, Wisconsin Conservation Voices; anjali@conservationvoices.org

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For more information

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