

LWVWI: Statement on Joint Committee hearing

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December 10, 2020

To: Senate Committee on Elections, Ethics and Rural Issues

Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

Re: 2020 General Election Review

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin looks forward with interest to viewing the session scheduled for December 11 by your committees to review the 2020 General Election. While the notice for this public hearing does not name the individuals who will speak nor the topics that will be discussed, we gather from the media that the main topic will be an investigation of complaints and allegations of fraud received by lawmakers about the election. This statement gives you the League's perspective, based on what our observers have reported and the partial recounts in Dane and Milwaukee counties.

The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. We are proud of the fact that, despite the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the November 2020 election in our state went smoothly and had high participation. We commend our state and local election officials for their long hours of diligent work to make that possible. We also recognize the efforts of thousands of citizens who assisted local clerks and worked at the polls.

The challenges of 2020 were many, but the outcomes included enhanced voter outreach and a younger Election Day workforce. This year our municipal clerks offered multiple ways for citizens to vote safely and securely from home, at In-Person Absentee Voting sites, or at the polls on Election Day. Knowing that many of the older poll workers would not be safe working at the polls this year, hundreds of younger community members statewide stepped up and became election inspectors. We hope they will continue to serve in future elections.

The voting process was smooth in most localities, despite the high turnout amid the pandemic. The League had observers monitoring the voting process, including early voting, polling places, central count locations, post-election equipment audits, and the recount. As always, our observers commended the local election officials who made this possible.

The election was also secure and accurate. The partial recount in two counties found very few irregularities or problems, most of which were the result of human error. The audit found no evidence at all of widespread fraud in the election. The safeguards in our election system and our state's highly competent and responsible election officials ensure that our elections are fair and clean. There is no justification for the extreme measures being discussed in the courts and the media, which could invalidate the legitimate votes of millions of law-abiding Wisconsin voters.

We can learn from the challenges the pandemic posed for many voters and work to make voting more accessible for all citizens. For example, while many voters found it difficult to have their absentee ballot certificate witnessed in the midst of the pandemic, the fact is that many older or disabled voters have faced that challenge for years. We can also look at how to streamline absentee ballot processing in a manner that is fair for all.

In the 2021-2022 legislative session, we recommend that lawmakers take what we have learned from the successes and challenges of the November 2020 election and support the needs of our local election officials, as they work to make it possible for every eligible citizen to cast a ballot and have it counted.