

Common Sense Wisconsin: Leads effort for 72-county advisory referenda on election uniformity

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We the People Can Push Veto-Proof Effort to Make Sure Ballots, Votes, and Voters Are Treated the Same Across Wisconsin

[Waukesha County, Wisc...] Common Sense Wisconsin supports uniformity in the state's election processes. The conservative policy organization is pushing for the Legislature to launch the process of constitutionally protecting uniformity and fairness in our elections, and for Counties to adopt advisory referendums that will show politicians in Madison that the people support election uniformity.

"Voters are more likely to participate in elections if they believe their vote matters," said Common Sense Wisconsin Executive Director Joe Handrick. "Constitutionally protecting the voting process will increase the public's faith in elections."

Common Sense Wisconsin is encouraging every county in the state to place this advisory referendum on the ballot the next time there will be significant voter turnout across the state, which will be the November 2022 election.

Question: Should the Wisconsin Legislature prepare and place on the statewide ballot a Constitutional Amendment requiring that election administration, access to ballots, and counting of ballots be as nearly uniform as practicable?

A leading conservative legal expert reacted favorably to the plan. "This proposal is quite simple and at the same time quite profound," said Jim Troupis, a constitutional attorney and former judge. "Frankly, it is overdue, as we learned last fall, election

laws were not administered in a uniform manner throughout the State and that is a fundamental problem.”

Handrick said while past incidents have eroded some people’s confidence in the fairness of the administration of some recent elections, this Amendment effort is forward looking. “This is not about re-litigating the past,” said Handrick. “We want to ensure that every person’s access to the ballot is uniform and that every vote is treated and processed uniformly. We believe that by doing so, more people will vote—having a greater confidence that their vote will matter and will be treated the same as any other cast in this state.”

- In 2020, when he himself was on the ballot, the mayor of Milwaukee closed all but 5 polling locations in the city, which has the largest minority voting population in the state. Meanwhile Madison, a city less than half Milwaukee’s size, had 60 locations available.
- Less than 24 hours before the polls opened in April of 2020, the Governor shut-down in-person voting. His edict was ruled unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court.
- The five largest cities in Wisconsin received more than \$6 million from a foundation funded by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and granted unprecedented access and influence to a private, ideological organization who directed the administration of election efforts leading up to and on Election Day.
- Different jurisdictions in Wisconsin have different procedures for distribution and counting of absentee ballots and clerks apply differing levels of discretion in how they treat various incomplete forms.

“Common Sense Wisconsin believes the administration of elections must be as uniform as possible across the state,” said Bill McCoshen, chairman of the CSW Policy Board. “Voters and votes must be treated the same whether they are in Superior or South Milwaukee, Madison or Minocqua. Ballots should be processed and counted in a uniform manner everywhere in the state. Election rules cannot be changed by rogue officials or bureaucrats at the last moment and the funding and administration of elections cannot ever again be turned over to private organizations.”

Members of Wisconsin’s 72 County Boards can find out more information on how they can place the Common Sense Wisconsin Election Uniformity referendum on their November 2022 ballot by visiting CommonSenseWisconsin.org.

“Nobody should fear what the people have to say on this issue,” said McCoshen. “Based on what I’ve heard from all across the state, I believe there is widespread support for placing these election protections in our Constitution, let’s find out.”

Wisconsin currently has specific constitutional protections of uniformity in taxation, in certain forms of local government, and in the enactment of general laws by the legislature, but nothing on what is perhaps the most fundamental right of all, the right to vote.

The 72-County Common Sense Wisconsin Uniformity Referenda would provide momentum toward a Constitutional amendment. In order to amend the state constitution a majority of members in both houses of the state legislature must vote in favor of the amendment in two consecutive sessions. Once the amendment passes the legislature twice, it must be approved in vote by the voters at the next general election.

CS Wisconsin, Inc. launched Common Sense Wisconsin earlier this Spring to be a platform for advancing policy ideas to increase the efficacy and responsiveness of Wisconsin government. To contribute, or to find additional information, visit www.CommonSenseWisconsin.com or see us on social media @CSWisconsin.