

GWAAR: Eliminate existing voting barriers, don't create new ones

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Wisconsin: — Voting is a high priority for older adults. Despite a strong desire to vote, as people age, there are often barriers standing between their desire to vote and being able to vote. State Assembly members are scheduled to vote Tuesday on several pieces of legislation that will make voting more difficult for older adults and people with disabilities. The Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. (GWAAR) opposes the following bills included on this week's Assembly calendar: AB192, SB 204/AB 201, SB 205/AB 179, SB 212/AB 198.

“Health conditions, disabilities, lack of transportation, limited broadband access and a lack of basic digital literacy skills already pose significant barriers for older voters; these bills would make it even harder for them to vote,” said Robert Kellerman, Executive Director of the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc., “We are asking legislators to consider how older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers will be impacted by these bills, and to work with us to craft legislation to address existing barriers not create new ones.”

While amendments have slightly improved some of the voting bills, the proposed legislation continues to pose significant concern for aging and disability advocates. According to Kellerman, “Many older voters and family caregivers share that voting is already difficult, particularly for those who no longer drive, live alone, are primary caregivers, and/or are without access to computers, smart phones, printers and other devices often needed to obtain voting applications. We support elections that are secure and have integrity but must also ensure they are accessible and inclusive.”

Concerns regarding the proposed bills include making it harder to receive and return absentee ballots, conflicting restrictions on who can/must provide voting

support for absentee voters in residential care facilities, and preventing clerks from correcting minor mistakes on the absentee ballot certificates.

About GWAAR

The Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc. is a nonprofit agency committed to supporting the successful delivery of aging programs and services in 70 counties and 11 tribes in Wisconsin. We provide aging lead agencies in our service area with training, technical assistance, and advocacy to ensure the availability and quality of programs and services to meet the changing needs of older people in Wisconsin.