

# IRG: Calls for state to abolish Wisconsin Elections Commission

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**Madison, Wis.** — The Institute for Reforming Government today called for the state to abolish the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) and released a detailed policy proposal to guard against bureaucratic, unaccountable electoral oversight. IRG's policy solution recommends utilizing the secretary of state's office to oversee elections since this office is also accountable to the people by being an elected position itself.

"It is time to abolish WEC and implement good government accountability when it comes to Wisconsin's elections and work to restore confidence among Wisconsin residents," **said Chris Reader, executive vice president of IRG.** "When unelected bureaucrats oversee Wisconsin's elections it can lead to the erosion of faith and confidence in our electoral system. Thirty-three other states have elected officials overseeing the election process, providing a good measure of accountability by empowering people across ideological spectrums to provide a check on who manages elections. This is a good government measure that will benefit all Wisconsinites."

## Highlights of the policy proposal:

1. The citizens of 33 states reserve to themselves the right to directly elect their chief elections official. This gives them the ability to hold the elected chief elections official accountable at the ballot box. There is currently no similar opportunity for Wisconsinites to hold the WEC accountable.
2. Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle have been trying to correct the failings of state elections oversight for many years. The legislature created WEC following accusations that its predecessor, the Government Accountability Board

(GAB), systematically engaged in partisan decision-making (the GAB was governed by gubernatorially-appointed retired judges). The GAB was itself the product of dissatisfaction with the partisanship of its predecessor, the Elections Board (which comprised eight political appointees).

3. In the last few years, WEC has faced mounting criticism for how it has managed Wisconsin's elections. Many see WEC's decisions as regularly bending or ignoring the law in favor of partisan objectives. This has called into question the integrity of Wisconsin's elections.

4. The integrity of our elections can be secured by making the top elections official democratically accountable to the people of Wisconsin. 33 states- including Iowa, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Minnesota, confer the responsibility for administering elections on an elected officer. Electing the top elections official would empower citizens from all across the ideological spectrum to provide a check on the health of Wisconsin's electoral system and management of elections every four years.

5. Wisconsin's Secretary of State, a constitutional officer, is elected every four years. Currently, the office is significantly under-utilized, so it would have more than enough capacity to administer Wisconsin's election laws through a legislative act transferring the Commission's responsibilities and FTEs to the Secretary of State.

**Read the full policy paper [here](#).**