

Wisconsin Conservation Voters: Legislature attacking our freedom to vote instead of delivering COVID relief

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MADISON - In its repeated committee meetings on campaigns and elections, the state legislature is trying to put up barriers to voting, rather than doing its duty to provide COVID relief to struggling Wisconsinites.

For the second time since December, the committee is stifling the voices of the people by holding an invite-only hearing and proposing additional challenges that take away our freedom to vote.

Member organizations of the Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition (WVRC) are working to ensure every Wisconsin citizen, regardless of where they live or the color of their skin, are able to exercise their freedom to vote equally.

The WVRC has made it clear that the following actions must be implemented immediately to ensure every eligible Wisconsinite has an opportunity to cast their ballot:

- **Protect early voting** and consider legislation or reforms that would **expand**

early voting hours;

- **Implement automatic voter registration** through the Wisconsin Department of Motor Vehicles to improve accessibility to the polls and to keep voting information accurate and updated;
- **Expand Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) access** by expanding both DMV hours and locations, and improving ADA accessibility of DMV locations, to ensure that all voters who need an ID for voting are able to obtain it;
- **Creating ADA-compliant absentee ballots** so that voters with disabilities have equitable access to vote from home privately and independently without having to risk their health;
- **Ensuring adequate funding for a statewide election administration;**
- **Allow people who have been convicted of a felony to register and vote upon release from prison.**

Anjali Bhasin, the Civic Engagement Director of Wisconsin Conservation Voters had this to say about the March 10 hearing:

“Democracy and freedom are fundamental tenets of our country. Rather than silencing the voices of the people, we should focus on making voting more accessible by extending early voting hours and implementing automatic voter registration.”

Ryan Sievert, a Janesville voter who voted from home shared his 2020 voting experience:

“I voted absentee in every election in 2020. It allowed me to vote safely from home during the pandemic. I plan to continue voting absentee in the future and think every voter should have the same opportunity going forward.”

Organizations that signed on to this statement: Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, ACLU of Wisconsin, Common Cause Wisconsin, Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Fair Elections Center, Souls to the Polls, Voting Rights Lab, African American Roundtable, Inc.