

WisDems: Disability advocates push back against GOP voter suppression legislation

Posted on Thursday, May 13, 2021

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(MADISON) — Republicans in the state legislature [voted in favor of three bills this week](#) limiting access to absentee ballots and attacking Wisconsin's right to vote, following the lead of states like Georgia, Florida, and Arizona.

After record turnout in the 2020 election, the GOP is leading an all-out assault on democracy under the guise of "election integrity." Wisconsin Republicans are playing their part in this partisan power grab by limiting absentee voting with no regard for how these restrictions could hurt voters with disabilities.

Disability advocates pushed back yesterday, calling out the GOP for their campaign to limit voting and to make it more difficult for disabled voters to cast ballots.

- [Melanie Ramey of Madison](#): **"This is a form of bullying and it's absolutely unacceptable."**
- [Door County voter with a disability](#): **"Senate Bill 203 will create an undue burden and barrier to a group of individuals who already face systemic challenges to exercising the right to vote."**
- [Auburndale voter with a physical disability](#): **"If my parents weren't able to return my ballot, I would need to ask a friend, teacher or neighbor and hope that they hadn't already helped someone else. This is an extra hoop to jump through that could limit voting."**
- [Parent Advocate from Glendale, Wisconsin](#): **"This bill seems like incredible government overreach that will lead to confusion and people accidentally breaking the law by simply trying to be helpful good neighbors."**

Read more about how the GOP-led voting legislation could adversely affect voters with disabilities below.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Disabled voters say Republican efforts in Wisconsin Legislature will make it harder for them to cast ballots](#)

Wisconsinites with disabilities lashed out Wednesday at Republican lawmakers for passing bills that they said would make it harder for them to vote.

“This is a form of bullying and it’s absolutely unacceptable,” said Melanie Ramey of Madison, who faces challenges with voting because she is visually impaired by macular degeneration.

“They should be ashamed of themselves for trying to have bills and trying to pass legislation that seeks to disenfranchise some of Wisconsin’s most vulnerable citizens.”

Ramey was one of four people with disabilities who spoke out against the legislation in a virtual news conference hosted by Disability Rights Wisconsin. They directed most of their ire at Senate Bill 203, which would limit who can return absentee ballots for others.

[...]

Wisconsin State Journal: [Disability rights advocates push back against GOP voting legislation](#)

Disability rights advocates on Wednesday pushed back against a number of Republican bills proposing changes to Wisconsin’s absentee voting process that they say would make it more difficult for people with disabilities to cast ballots.

Disability Rights Wisconsin and voters with disabilities in particular took issue with two bills the Republican-controlled state Senate passed Tuesday. One would make changes, including some new restrictions, on how absentee ballots can be returned, and another would prohibit local election officials from filling out incomplete information on a voter’s absentee ballot certificate, such as missing witness address information.

“Voters with disabilities have a higher utilization of absentee voting because so many experience barriers to voting in person,” said Barbara Beckert, director of

external advocacy for Disability Rights Wisconsin, during a Zoom call Wednesday. “These are among a number of bills introduced in February that would put in place new barriers and restrictions that would make it harder to vote for many of the voters that we assist.”

[...]

Associated Press: [Wisconsin disabled community opposes election law changes](#)

Wisconsin voters with disabilities are urging lawmakers to reconsider a pair of Wisconsin voters with disabilities urged lawmakers on Wednesday to reconsider two Republican-backed bills passed by the state Senate that would make it more difficult to cast absentee ballots as part of the broader GOP push to make it harder to vote by mail following Donald Trump’s defeat.

Advocates and those with disabilities said the two measures put people with physical challenges at a particular disadvantage. Disability Rights Wisconsin estimates that 23% of registered voters in the state have some sort of disability, based on data from the American Association of People with Disabilities.

“Ultimately, they’re harming a very large minority,” said Stephanie Birmingham, who has the condition osteogenesis imperfecta and uses a wheelchair. Birmingham, who lives in Sturgeon Bay, joined others on a virtual news conference to speak out against the bills.

One of the measures that the Wisconsin Senate passed on Tuesday would prohibit anyone other than a member of a voter’s immediate family or a legal guardian from returning a completed absentee ballot for another person. Violators would be guilty of a felony.

That is a particular hardship for people who may not have an immediate family member alive or nearby to return a ballot, said Melanie Ramey, of Madison, who has low vision due to macular degeneration. It could also make it more difficult to find someone willing to return a ballot because doing so would carry the risk of being charged if a person doesn’t have the appropriate paperwork, said Andy Thain, of Thorp, who has cerebral palsy.

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