

# Common Cause WI: Wisconsin Elections Commission must be strengthened

Posted on Wednesday, Oct 19, 2022

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In late August, the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) unveiled and put forward a proposal to add up to eleven additional staff members and an increase of \$1.34 million in additional state funding in order to meet the vastly increased workload and demand for services that has occurred over the past several years.

The vote in support of this proposal was unanimous: 6 to 0. All three Republican and all three Democratic WEC Commissioners voted to forward this request to the Governor and the Wisconsin Legislature for additional funding in the upcoming 2023-24 biennium state budget. The Republican Chair of WEC, **Don M. Millis** of Madison, took the leading role in putting forward this common sense, non-partisan proposal.

In the wake of the 2020 election in Wisconsin, about which numerous false claims have been made that the election in this state was “stolen” from former President **Donald Trump**, there has been an astounding 800 percent increase in records requests made to the WEC and a 233 percent increase in election-related complaints filed with the WEC.

The Wisconsin Elections Commission and the Wisconsin Ethics Commission were devised and established by majority Republicans in the Wisconsin Legislature and former Gov. **Scott Walker** in December 2015. The two commissions replaced the non-partisan Wisconsin Government Accountability (GAB), which had been established in 2007 in the wake of Wisconsin’s infamous Legislative Caucus Scandal of 2001-02.

Common Cause in Wisconsin (CC/WI) worked closely with former Republican State Senator **Michael Ellis** of Neenah to devise and pass the GAB and strongly opposed its destruction. Nonetheless, CC/WI strongly supports the bipartisan request from the six WEC Commissioners to enhance and strengthen WEC in the upcoming budget and urges the Governor and Legislature to do so as well.

“It is time to make the WEC strong, so we can have faith in our elections. More staff is needed to address the increased volume of records requests and complaints. All of the Commissioners have called for this action. Let’s do it!” said CC/WI Advisory Board Co-Chair **Penny Bernard Schaber** of Appleton.

Co-Chair **David Deininger** of Monroe added, “As a former member of the GAB, I was disheartened to see it abolished. But if the WEC is to be an effective overseer and administrator of elections in Wisconsin, it must be given the resources to effectively do the job the Legislature has given it.”