

# Disability Vote Coalition: Statement on voting bills veto

Posted on Monday, Apr 11, 2022

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The Disability Vote Coalition thanks Governor Evers for protecting our freedom to vote by taking action last Friday on voting bills that we have opposed. For our democracy to work, it must include all of us. Senate bills SB 939, SB 941, and SB 935 would have created new barriers and significantly restricted the ability of voters with disabilities, older adults, and many other Wisconsin voters to participate in the electoral process.

- **SB 939** would have created new restrictions for absentee voting. Absentee voting is essential to many voters with disabilities because of the barriers they face to voting in person.
- **SB 941** would impede WEC and other state agencies from implementing federal election guidance and procedures without approval of state legislators. Voters with disabilities rely on protections in federal law such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Voting Rights Act (VRA), Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and guidance from federal agencies including Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).
- **SB 935** would prohibit clerks from correcting minor defects on the absentee ballot certificate; it also adds to the number of fields a voter must complete on the certificate. These measures will result in more ballots being uncounted. The bill's proposal for nursing home staff to conduct voting during future pandemics merits future consideration.

We are disappointed that **SB 937** was not signed into law. SB 937 clarified eligibility for Wisconsin's Indefinitely confined status for those who always need to vote absentee due to disability illness, or frailty. It allowed indefinitely confined voters to prove their identity in a manner that accommodates their disability, frailty, and/or health condition. Voters would no longer need to reapply to maintain

their status if they did not vote in a primary election. While some changes we requested to the bill were not made, it was amended to address the most serious concerns advocates raised. SB 937 could have protected this important status for voters who always need to vote absentee due to disability, frailty or health concerns.

Voting rights are the cornerstone of our democracy. Our goal should be to make it easier for our citizens to participate in elections – not harder. In that spirit, we ask our state and national policy makers to work with us to make our elections fully accessible and inclusive of people of all abilities. Thank you, Governor Evers for taking action to protect our freedom to vote

### **About the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition**

*The WDVC is a non-partisan effort to help ensure full participation in the entire electoral process of voters with disabilities. Members include people with disabilities, and community agencies including Access to Independence, Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired, NAMI Wisconsin, Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.(GWAAR), CIL Western Wisconsin, People First Wisconsin, Mental Health America, Wisconsin Association of the Deaf, Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers, and many others. The Coalition is coordinated by Disability Rights Wisconsin and Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities.*