

# John Imes: Thriving economy, improved environment need well-functioning democracy

Posted on Thursday, Apr 28, 2022

*The column below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.*

Democracy in Wisconsin is under attack by autocratic forces. Their victory will spell doom for a more sustainable economy and environment.

The threat comes from the continued onslaught of hyper-partisan redistricting, plus restrictions on voting, conspiracy-laden legal actions, and baseless claims of election fraud. If successful, these efforts will lead to one-party rule that ignores the will of the people and undercuts local businesses. Even successes in clean energy jobs and environmental protection will be reversed.

Small business owners understand that a thriving economy depends on a vibrant democracy. The two go hand in hand. And in one-party rule, the politically well-connected and business as usual will control the agenda.

**>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

To ensure a healthy economy and environment, we need to strengthen, not weaken voting rights and democracy across Wisconsin. A national poll of small business owners found 74% support for such efforts.

Fortunately, businesses, large and small are taking bold steps to help lead the way.

The American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN) is convening businesses and stakeholders with a shared commitment to democracy. Strong leadership is needed to reject political messaging that's designed to undermine our democratic process.

ASBN strongly supports businesses that provide flexible options for their employees such as time off to vote and works to increase voter turnout by advocating for early voting, mail-in ballots, and extended voting hours to expand participation in democracy while supporting our economy.

The Wisconsin Business Leaders for Democracy sent letters of support to the Wisconsin Election Commission administrator, staff and over 1,800 municipal election clerks across the state thanking them and expressing support ahead of the 2022 elections. Signatories include Milwaukee-based industry leaders and come after election officials nationwide faced threats of violence and harassment following the 2020 election. “The bottom line is strong democratic processes, in Wisconsin and nationwide, underpin the economic success of our businesses,” said David Lubar, President & CEO of Lubar & Co. “There is no thriving business environment without a fully functioning democracy. And ultimately that’s why we all joined this effort.”

Democracy Found, another Wisconsin-based organization, advocates for ranked-choice voting, a system that would provide more candidates and potentially more balanced and diverse points of view all the way through a November runoff election.

One does not have to be a member of these groups to prevent un-democratic forces from eliminating free and fair elections.

Right now, candidates across the state are circulating nomination papers to get on the ballot. Every voter supporting democracy should ask each candidate to answer some simple questions. For example:

Do you support nonpartisan election administration as a fundamental pillar of our democracy?

Do you support full access to voting by mail and the use of secure drop boxes?

Do you support efforts to protect election officials, including ordinary citizens and volunteers from threats and intimidation?

These questions and more can also be asked at candidate forums or by the media or included in questionnaires by interest groups. Political Action Committees should also demand that candidates seeking campaign contributions not take any actions that would undermine our democracy.

While we're at it, shouldn't we require additional disclosures of campaign fundraising or disclaimers regarding political advertising that's designed to misinform and instill distrust of our democratic process?

Each of us has a role to play to ensure free and fair elections. Anti-democracy efforts that weaken voting rights will only lead to a more extremely partisan and autocratic one-party rule that favors special interests at the expense of local businesses, workers, families, communities, and our environment.

For the sake of Wisconsin's future, please support expanding voting rights to strengthen our democracy and ensure a more sustainable economy.

*- John Imes is a former small-business owner, co-founder of the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative, and a member of the ASBN Business for Democracy Working Group.*