

Rep. Duchow: Joins Sen. Bernier to tighten “indefinitely confined” status

Posted on Tuesday, Feb 1, 2022

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Madison, WI – Rep. Cindi Duchow (R-Town of Delafield) and Sen. Kathy Bernier (R-Chippewa Falls) last Friday began circulating a bill clarifying which voters qualify for “indefinitely confined” status. The bill defines “indefinitely confined” to clarify that it can be used by those who “cannot travel independently without significant burden because of frailty, physical illness, or a disability that will last longer than one year.” The bill also removes those added to the “indefinitely confined” roles from March 6, 2020 and November 6, 2020, requiring submission of a new application.

During the 2020 election, clerks in Milwaukee and Dane counties advised voters that anyone could claim “indefinitely confined” status because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Statewide, the total number of voters who claimed “indefinitely confined” status surged, going from around 72,000 to just over 220,000. The Wisconsin Supreme Court later struck down the clerks’ erroneous interpretation of the statute.

Persons claiming “indefinitely confined” status are not required to show a valid photo ID. Using Wisconsin Election Commission (WEC) data, the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) discovered that up to 48,554 voters had not previously voted by methods that required them to have provided photo identification.

“It should be easy to vote and hard to cheat,” said Rep. Duchow. “Unfortunately, this loophole in state statutes makes it easy to cheat by letting people dodge our photo ID laws. This bill goes a long way in making it easy for people who are truly confined to exercise their constitutional rights, while hopefully eliminating an avenue that can be used to game the system.”