

Rep. Emerson: Unlock the vote package

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MADISON – Today, Rep. Jodi Emerson (D-Eau Claire) and Senator Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) introduced the Unlock the Vote bill Package aimed at protecting one's right to vote, and fair representation.

In Wisconsin, an estimated 65,000 Wisconsin residents are under some form of community corrections and cannot vote. According to a recent study from Columbia University, 60% of those people are on parole, probation, or extended supervision. For those that are reentering communities across the state, there is an expectation that they will secure employment, pay taxes, and rejoin society. There should also be an expectation that they would regain their right to participate in the political process, via restoration of their voting rights after release from prison.

The Unlock the Vote package responds to these concerns, with the following bills:

- **LRB-5098** relating to: establishing a plan to register qualified electors who are detained in jail and to allow the electors to vote while detained.
- **LRB-5182** relating to: restoring the right to vote to certain persons barred from voting as a result of a felony conviction, changing the information required on voter registration forms, and changing voting procedure for certain persons who are convicted of felonies.
- **LRB-5183** relating to: automatic voter registration, deceptive election practices, voter intimidation and suppression, voter rights, polling place posting and language requirements, election manual requirements, granting rule-making authority, and providing a penalty.
- **LRB-5936** relating to: counting individuals confined in state prison to determine population for redistricting purposes.

Rep. Jodi Emerson (D-Eau Claire) released the following statement in response:

“Casting a vote is a civil right and is an essential component of our democracy. Civil rights do not disappear because of your past. Some of these include a right to a fair trial, the right to government services and the right to a public education. You are entitled to these rights even if you are on probation and parole, so why should the civil right of voting be any different? It is our duty as legislators to ensure that all of those who are eligible to vote have the opportunity to do so. ”