

Rep. Pope: Supports Gov. Evers' proposal to let voters directly challenge criminal abortion ban

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MADISON—Gov. Tony Evers announced yesterday that he is calling a special session of the Legislature on October 4th at 10:00 a.m. to take up his proposal to create a statewide binding referendum process through a constitutional amendment. Under the Governor's proposal, Wisconsin voters could file petitions with the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) to hold a vote on proposed state laws and constitutional amendments or to repeal existing state laws.

The proposed constitutional amendment would allow the majority of Wisconsin voters who support safe and legal access to abortion to repeal the state's 1849 criminal abortion ban. If this abortion ban were to go into effect, nearly all abortions would be criminalized in Wisconsin, without exceptions for cases of rape or incest. The 1849 abortion ban is currently in litigation, leaving the future of abortion access in Wisconsin uncertain and putting the reproductive rights of those who can bear children in jeopardy. Representative Sondy Pope (D-Mt. Horeb) joined Gov. Evers for his announcement and released the following statement in response:

“Despite the fact a majority of Wisconsin’s citizens support protecting access to safe and legal abortion, since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned this summer, Republican legislators have continually rejected many efforts by Governor Evers and legislative Democrats to protect abortion access. Currently, there is no process in Wisconsin that allows Wisconsinites to vote to reject existing state statutes like Wisconsin’s pre-Civil War era criminal abortion ban. It is good to see the Governor propose a constitutional amendment that would give Wisconsin voters the power to directly challenge outdated laws that threaten their freedom. 20 other

states including Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio already have a process in place that allows voters to change state law by referendum and introduce referenda or initiatives to be voted on by their citizens.

“This goes beyond the issue of abortion access. Our Republican-led state legislature consistently ignores the will of the people by refusing to pass or even hold public hearings on policies that have widespread public support. Wisconsinites should not have to vote on issues like protecting access to reproductive freedom, however, I believe there should be a pathway for voters to enact the change they wish to see when their voices are ignored by elected officials.”

In order for a constitutional amendment to be adopted in Wisconsin, an identical amendment proposal must pass two consecutive legislatures before it is presented to Wisconsin voters for their approval. The full text of the Governor’s proposal can be found [here](#).