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Sen. Carpenter: Wisconsin voters deserve to hold the reins

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(MADISON)—Today, Senator Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) issued the following statement regarding today's Special Session to Allow Binding Referenda and Ballot Initiatives:

"Wisconsin's Constitution and the United States Constitution begin with three simple words: "We, the people…"—That's why Governor Evers called the legislature to convene in special session to consider a transformational proposal that would put more power directly into the hands of Wisconsinites, and bring us a step closer to a Wisconsin where *the will of the people is the law of the land*.

"Today we had an opportunity to honor our commitment to a just government *by the people,* through consideration of a constitutional amendment providing for Wisconsinites' direct involvement in crafting our state's laws. Once again, the Do-Nothing Republicans who lead the legislature didn't show up for work. If Republican legislators truly want to represent the people, they should have no objections to putting this proposal on a path toward a referendum vote. However, Republican policy positions are too unpopular to survive a process led by popular will and responsive to the people. That's why they cling to their gerrymandered districts, restrictions on voting, and opposition to direct democracy.

"If adopted, the governor's amendment to our state's constitution would allow citizens to create their own ballot initiatives and referenda. What that means is that citizens would be able to have changes to our state's laws and constitution drafted. If enough eligible voters sign a petition in favor of the proposed changes, then that citizen-crafted legislation would go before the voters in the next general election. If a majority of statewide voters approve of it, then the changes would be adopted into law.

“This type of legislative procedure is available in many other states, but not in Wisconsin. It could be used by the people to make sure that our laws and constitution suit their needs as they deem appropriate. Wisconsinites could choose to create an independent redistricting commission to end gerrymandering, ensure their right to privacy in medical decisions, expand BadgerCare, legalize medical or recreational cannabis, or institute other policies for which there is broad consensus among the people.

“Strong majorities of Wisconsinites support these ideas. Our government is founded on the notion that the people themselves are sovereign, but an unrepresentative legislature threatens that foundational notion. Since the legislature doesn’t answer to the popular will, we must pass this joint resolution and give Wisconsinites the opportunity to take back their rightful place holding the reins of a government that is of the people, by the people, and for the people.”