

Constitutional amendments barring non-citizens from voting, use of private money to run elections head to voters after clearing Assembly

Posted on Thursday, Nov 9, 2023

Voters will now weigh in on whether non-citizens should be barred from voting in Wisconsin and if local and state governments should be prohibited from using private money to cover election costs after a pair of constitutional amendments cleared the Assembly today.

Both amendments have now cleared the full Legislature in back-to-back sessions. Backers have signaled SJR 78, which would bar the use of private funds for election costs, would appear on the April ballot. Meanwhile, SJR 71, which would bar non-citizens from voting in local, state or federal elections, is slated for the November 2024 ballot.

Minority Leader Greta Neubauer, D-Racine, ripped the proposals as an effort that will “fly in the face of good bipartisan work.”

“Not only are these amendments an attempt to limit access to the ballot box based on misinformation spread by some in this body about the security of our elections,” she said. “But they’re part of a broader effort by legislative Republicans to circumvent the traditional lawmaking process and enshrine the political agenda in our state’s most important document, the Wisconsin constitution.”

>> 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.](#)

Majority Leader Tyler August, R-Lake Geneva, argued the measures just allow voters to weigh in on how Wisconsin should conduct its elections.

“And so I look forward to the people weighing in on this at the ballot box; excited to see this become part of our state’s Constitution,” he said.

The Assembly also signed off on SJR 73, which would add a photo ID requirement to the state Constitution. That amendment, which cleared the Senate earlier this week, would have to pass both houses again in the 2025-26 session before it would go to a referendum.

All three resolutions cleared the chamber along party lines.

The state Constitution already states that every U.S. citizen 18 or older who’s a resident of Wisconsin is a qualified elector eligible to vote here, subject to requirements established in state law. The amendment would add that only a U.S. citizen aged 18 or older can vote in a national, state or local election, as well as a referendum.

The amendment was proposed after some communities began allowing non-citizens to vote in local elections, such as those for school board.

The amendment to bar private money in Wisconsin elections was sparked by the grants a group largely funded by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg gave to state communities ahead of the 2020 election. Altogether, 196 communities received \$10.3 million, with \$8.8 million of that going to the state’s five largest cities.

The amendment also seeks to ban anyone other than an election official designated by law from performing any task related to a primary, general election or referendum.

State law already includes a photo ID requirement to vote. Backers said it was introduced to safeguard against a challenge to the state statute with the liberal majority on the state Supreme Court.