

Gov. Evers: Signs bill to help bolster school bus driver workforce

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NEW GLARUS – Gov. Tony Evers today signed Assembly Bill 233, now 2023 Wisconsin Act 26, allowing members of school boards to serve as volunteer school bus drivers with the appropriate licensure. The governor was joined for the signing today by members of the New Glarus School Board, who have been [critical advocates](#) of passing the proposal this session. According to testimony provided by the Wisconsin School Bus Association, nationally and in Wisconsin, more than half of bus contractors are working with a 6 to 15 percent shortage of drivers.

“School bus drivers play a critical role in making sure our kids across our state can get to school and back home safely. Unfortunately, we know districts of all sizes across our state are struggling to find drivers to get our kids to school, to their games, and their extracurricular activities,” said Gov. Evers. “This legislation is critical for reducing barriers and helping expand the pool of available folks who can fill these important roles. While there is still more work we must do to keep address challenges districts are facing to find more drivers, this is new bipartisan law is a critical first step.”

[Assembly Bill 233](#), now 2023 Wisconsin Act 26:

- Adds school bus driver to the list of volunteer positions a school board member may hold without violating the doctrine of incompatibility;
- Specifies that the school board member must receive a school bus endorsement from WisDOT, hold a valid commercial driver’s license, receive no compensation for serving as a school bus driver, and agree to abstain from voting on issues before the board substantially and directly concerning school bus drivers; and
- Specifies that reimbursements for expenses incurred in connection with

volunteer services provided by school board members, including training or license renewal, do not change a board member's status as a volunteer school bus driver, coach, or supervisor.

The doctrine of incompatibility of office states that no person holding public office or a position of public employment can hold a second incompatible public office or position of public employment. Prior to Act 26, there were two exceptions to that law for school board members, allowing them to serve as volunteer coaches or extracurricular supervisors. Act 26 expands those exceptions to include serving as a volunteer bus driver as long as they do so on a volunteer basis and do not receive compensation, receive the proper licensure and a school bus endorsement from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) that authorizes them to operate a school bus, and agree to abstain from voting on related issues on the board.