

Rep. Rivera-Wagner: Introduces constitutional amendment to give Wisconsin voters direct voice on state laws

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MADISON — State Representative Amaad Rivera-Wagner (D-Green Bay) has introduced a proposed amendment to the Wisconsin Constitution that would create a citizen led ballot initiative process, allowing Wisconsin voters to propose or reject laws and constitutional amendments directly. Currently, only the Legislature has the authority to place statewide questions on the ballot in Wisconsin. Rivera-Wagner said the proposal comes at a time when the Legislature has effectively adjourned the Assembly nearly ten months early in the current two year legislative term.

“Just because the Legislature has stopped working does not mean the people of Wisconsin have stopped caring about the issues that affect their lives,” said Rep. Rivera-Wagner. “This proposal gives everyday Wisconsinites a real pathway to bring solutions forward when government refuses to act.”

Twenty six states already allow some form of citizen driven ballot initiatives or referendums, including neighboring states Michigan and Illinois.

The proposal would amend Article IV of the Wisconsin Constitution to create a structured process allowing citizens to propose and approve laws and constitutional amendments through ballot initiatives. It would also allow voters to reject acts of the Legislature through referendum, creating a direct legislative veto by the people.

To qualify for a statewide vote, citizens would collect the required number of signatures depending on the type of measure and file the full text with the

Wisconsin Elections Commission at least 120 days before a general election. If approved by a simple majority of voters, the measure would take effect 30 days after certification unless otherwise specified.

Rivera-Wagner said the proposal reflects the belief that the best ideas often come from the people closest to the challenges facing their communities. “At its core this proposal is about trust. Trusting the people of Wisconsin to engage in the democratic process and trusting our communities to bring forward solutions when government falls short,” Rivera-Wagner said. “Democracy works best when people have a real voice in shaping the policies that affect their lives.”

Rep. Rivera-Wagner introduced the proposal alongside Rep. Chris Sinicki (D-Milwaukee) and Sen. Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick). The amendment is currently circulating for co-sponsors.

Proposed constitutional amendments must pass the Legislature in identical form during two consecutive legislative sessions and then be approved by a majority of voters in a statewide referendum before taking effect.