



# JEFF SMITH

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR – 31<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019

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## Sen. Smith Introduces Voter Protection Act as His First Bill

MADISON – Today, Senator Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick) introduced the Voter Protection Act (LRB 1404/1) as his first bill as State Senator.

The Voter Protection Act was first introduced by Senator Jeff Smith during his second term as a State Representative in 2009. After leaving the legislature in 2010, Smith returned as the 31st District State Senator and vowed to reintroduce the Voter Protection Act as his first bill.

“I’m proud to continue my work for expanding voting accessibility and providing strong protections to prevent voter harassment, intimidation and deception on Election Day,” said Senator Jeff Smith. “Citizens deserve the greatest protections for their most precious rights as Americans.”

The twenty-two page Voter Protection Act is a comprehensive reform bill to protect voters while they make their choices on Election Day. The main components of the Voter Protection Act are as follows:

**Introduces Universal Voter Registration** – To make registration easier and more accessible, the VPA requires the Elections Commission to confidentially facilitate the registration of all eligible voters, with the strictest adherence to individual privacy protection practices.

**Includes Electronic Voter Registration** – Voters will be able to electronically register to vote with a secure website maintained by the Elections Commission.

**Protects Voters from Deception** – Grants voter suppression victims greater legal rights. Requires the Elections Commission to immediately investigate voter deception complaints and work closely with local authorities for prosecution.

**Increases Penalties for Voter Intimidation and Suppression** – Sends a clear message to individuals engaging in voter intimidation, suppression, deception and coercion by dramatically increasing penalties.

**Creates the “Voters Bill of Rights”** – Provides clear and reasonable protections for voters.

**Provides Election Officials with Additional Tools** – Provides our hardworking clerks and election volunteers with the ability to better serve non-English speaking voters and better information to educate clerks and volunteers.

The Voter Protection Act will now be circulated to members of the legislature to sign on as co-sponsors of the bill. Once turned in to the Senate Chief Clerk, the Voter Protection Act will be available to the public on the Legislature’s website, and then it will be referred to a Senate committee where it will await a public hearing.

*The 31<sup>st</sup> Senate District includes all of Buffalo and Pepin counties, portions of Trempealeau, Pierce, Dunn, Eau Claire, Chippewa and Jackson counties and very small portions of Chippewa and St. Croix counties.*