

April 26, 2011

The Honorable Gary Tauchen
Room 13 West, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

RE: Assembly Bill 7 and student IDs

Dear Chairman Tauchen:

As student government representatives on campuses across Wisconsin, we are writing to urge you to include student identification cards from all accredited institutions of higher education to the list of acceptable forms of identification in Assembly Bill 7.

As you know, current law does not require qualified voters to provide identification beyond stating their name and registration address at the polls, except in the cases of those who register to vote at their polling place or first-time voters who registered to vote by mail. The current version of AB 7 – and its companion, Senate Bill 6 – would require photo identification when casting a ballot and limit the types of acceptable identification to a narrow set of government-issued IDs, not including student IDs. We believe this places unnecessary burdens on students and taxpayers.

Kevin Kennedy, Director of the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board, testified in January before the Senate Committee on Transportation and Elections that “student identification card issued by an accredited institution of higher education, including a university, college or technical school” should be added to photo ID legislation. He said:

“College students should be permitted to use a picture identification card issued by the college or university. These cards are used to access many benefits limited to students associated with the college or university. The college or university has a vested interest in issuing secure forms of identification. Many students do not carry a driver license because they live on campus, use public transportation or do not drive.”

In many cases, student identification cards are already used as debit cards and, as Mr. Kennedy points out, for a number of other secure purposes. If enacted, AB 7 would be particularly burdensome on out-of-state students who are lawfully registered voters, but unlikely to have Wisconsin identification beyond their student IDs. It is estimated that there are 60,000 students from other states on our college and university campuses.

Students’ constitutional rights should not be subject to our ability to get to the DMV and pay \$28 for an otherwise unnecessary ID (or have taxpayer's pick up the cost), especially when 26 percent of Wisconsin's 91 DMVs are open one day a month or less, the state has only one DMV with weekend hours, and three Wisconsin counties have no DMV's at all. Moreover, at a time of when the state's budget is in crisis, additional costs to implement a new program that provides "free" identification cards to those without one is not a wise use of taxpayer's dollars, especially when taxpayers already pay to provide identification to students at Wisconsin's public schools, for example.

Voting is a sacred right and Wisconsin has a proud tradition of fostering civic participation. We ask that you add student IDs from all of Wisconsin's colleges and universities to AB 7.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jeanette Greenwood-Kane, President
Leticia Martinez, Assistant Director
Alverno College Student Government

Rich Steffensmeier, Executive Board Chair
Beloit College Student Congress

Jacob Weigandt, President
Madison College Student Senate

Joseph Ciccone, President
Trent Carlson, Executive Vice President
Marquette University Student Government

Mid-State Technical College Student Senate

Benjamin Hughey, President
Northland College Student Association

Buck Brackman, President
UW-Baraboo Student Government Association

Dylan Jambrek, President
UW-Eau Claire Student Senate

Gina Reynolds, Vice President
UW-Fond Du Lac Student Government Association

Stephen Behnke, President
UW-Fox Valley Student Association

Karly Wallace, President
Melissa Ruplinger, Vice President
UW-La Crosse Student Association

Brandon Williams, Chair
Adam Johnson, Vice Chair
UW-Madison Associated Students of Madison

Jacob Schmitt, Former President
UW-Manitowoc Student Senate

Jory DeLoach, President
UW-Marathon County Student Government Association

Kim Behrendt, President
Tiffany Strong, Vice President
UW-Marinette Student Government

Travis Romero-Boech, President
Angela Lang, Vice President
UW-Milwaukee Student Association

Jessica Casperson, President-Elect
UW-Oshkosh Student Association

Jisha Jose, Former State Senate Speaker
UW-Parkside Student Government Association

Sawyer C. Lubke, President
Andrew Steele, Vice President
UW-Stout Student Association

Jessica Duffy, President
UW-Superior Student Government Association

Bob Ebert, President
Brittany Westveer, Vice President
UW-Washington County Student Government Association

Nik Rettinger III, President
UW-Waukesha Student Government Association

Josh Kohnhorst, President
Viterbo University Student Government Association