

June 29, 2011

Dear Senator Fred Risser:

Please co-sponsor Representative Dick Spanbauer's LRB draft that would change the county clerk from a partisan elected official to a non-partisan elected official.

During the recent decade, we have seen election blunders that have severely eroded the public's confidence in our electoral process. Partisan elected officials were a significant factor that aggravated incidents in Florida in 2000, Ohio in 2004, and Wisconsin in 2011.

The Commission on Federal Election Reform, co-chaired by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker, III, issued a report in 2005. One of the recommendations of the Carter-Baker Commission: (http://www.american.edu/spa/cdem/upload/full_report.pdf page 85)

“Congress and the states should reconstitute election management institutions on a nonpartisan basis to make them more independent and effective. ...We believe the time has come to take politics as much as possible out of the institutions of election administration and to make these institutions nonpartisan.”

In 2007, election experts at the Moritz College of Law at the Ohio State University conducted a five state study of election law and procedures. Wisconsin rated quite highly, except in two areas. The report criticized the partisan ship of the county clerk, and issued a prophecy. (<http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/electionlaw/projects/registration-to-recounts/index.php>, page 126):

“Even if everyone involved makes a sincere effort to act in a nonpartisan and neutral manner, representatives of one party's candidate could be expected to charge unfairness in counties where the clerk – and therefore a majority of the board of canvassers – is of the other party. The consequence could thus be a replay of Florida's messy 2000 recount, in which **the public comes to doubt the neutrality of local officials conducting recounts, therefore undermining the integrity of the result.**”

Please co-sponsor this constitutional change, and help move Wisconsin Forward. The deadline for co-sponsorship is Friday July 8.

Sincerely,

Paul Malischke