

Fair Elections Wisconsin

November 22, 2006

Dear Governor Doyle:

Please consider promoting legislation to amend SB-1 to provide for a separate Election Administration Board. The flaw in SB-1 is that it severely undervalues election administration. The clear emphasis of SB-1 is investigation and enforcement of ethics and criminal violations. Obviously this is important, but election administration is equally important and deserves a separate board.

In the past several months, the existing State Elections Board has discussed and made many important policy decisions involving election administration. The SEB has handled approval (and denial) of new voting equipment, new security rules, rules for same-day registration, issues on the state-wide voter registration system, challenges to nominating papers, privacy of voter data, budgeting, and audits of vote counts.

If there is only one board, part-time volunteer board members will be overwhelmed by the depth and breadth of the decisions to be made. The current SEB receives an agenda of over 100 pages a few days before their meeting.

There is increasing recognition that election administration has a major and growing role in achieving proper elections. This is due to recent law changes on the federal and state level, and controversies around the country. This trend is likely to continue.

With separate boards, people with appropriate abilities can be appointed to matching tasks. Prosecutors, former judges, lawyers, and ethics professionals can be on the Government Accountability Board. Examples of appointees to the Election Administration Board would be a statistician, a voting equipment expert, and a municipal or county clerk.

Public accountability will be enhanced by having separate boards. Extremely long meetings and agendas make it very difficult for citizens to monitor these meetings and present arguments on important topics.

The legislation should require the following to improve public accountability. All meetings should be on Wisconsin Eye except in unusual circumstances. Telephone conference meetings should be webcast and available to the public via a toll-free phone number. Archived webcasts and MP3 files of the audio should be posted promptly to the Board website. Adequate audio equipment should be provided.

Currently there is nearly universal criticism over decisions based upon partisan bias. Let's not replace this with policy decisions that are flawed due to lack of expertise.

On Behalf of Fair Elections Wisconsin,

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Fair Elections Wisconsin is an independent all-volunteer organization working for elections that are accurate, well administered, and transparent.