



Your Vote Matters

I wanted to remind everyone who is eligible to vote, to engage in their civic duty to do so. Thursday, October 31st is the last day to request an absentee ballot for regular and overseas voters and Sunday, November 3rd is the last day to vote in-person absentee. Otherwise, Election Day is Tuesday, November 5th with polls open from 7AM until 8PM.

I cannot stress enough the importance of voting. It is the bedrock of our democracy to keep our constitutional republic thriving. We must not take this right for granted; make your voice heard.

To prepare for the upcoming election, in the past year and a half the State Legislature did take several steps to increase security measures for this election. In addition, our poll watchers and election officials are more informed and they have gained valuable experience since our last presidential election.

Unfortunately, our governor vetoed a very important measure to assist our election officials when dealing with ineligible voters. Senate Bill 98 would have required a label of “Not valid for voting purposes” to be affixed to IDs the state offers to non-citizens living in the state. Our state offers several forms of ID and it can add undue confusion for our election officials administering the Voter ID law. This issue will now be addressed at the latest Wisconsin Elections Commission meeting on Friday due to the increase in reports of non-citizens attempting to register to vote.

Another unresolved issue deals with the City of Milwaukee and their process for counting votes. By their own choice – not mandated by state law – the city uses a central count to process their absentee ballots. A bill put forth would have allowed the processing of absentee ballots on Monday and not the day of the election. I, along with a majority of my committee members did not move the bill forward in the legislative process. I stand firm in my decision not to change the voting procedure in a presidential year.

The previous presidential election saw record numbers of absentee voting and some of our election workers were overwhelmed. I understand that, but I maintain Milwaukee must properly staff and manage the current process; and they are doing so by all reported accounts from Paulina Gutierrez, the executive director of Milwaukee’s Election Commission. I will mention she did rebuff my efforts to meet this past summer to discuss their desired reforms. So much for starting a dialogue with the chairperson of the State Senate elections committee.

In conclusion, I hope for record turnout at the polls next month and increased participation in all levels of government. Thomas Jefferson said it best, “An educated citizenry is a bulwark of democracy.” Get to know the candidates down ballot and make your voice heard.