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Rep. Mark Spreitzer introduces local control legislation

MADISON – Rep. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) recently introduced AB 262, a piece of bipartisan legislation to bring back local control to cities and villages. The proposal allows governing bodies in municipalities operating under a manager form of government to decide locally whether residency in that municipality should be required for an appointed city or village manager.

“This bill creates parity for cities and villages operating under a manager form of government by allowing a residency requirement on their chief executive officer even though that manager is appointed, rather than elected,” Rep. Spreitzer stated. “This bill is merely permissive, allowing cities and villages that operate under this rather unique system to impose this requirement should they so choose, rather than mandating they do so.”

Currently, 10 cities and 10 villages in Wisconsin operate under a council-manager form of government, rather than the more traditional mayor-council form of government. Under a manager system, elected council or board members appoint a manager, who acts as the chief executive officer. In addition to overseeing the government, a city manager is often the public face of the city, much like a mayor would be. Notably, an elected mayor has a *de facto* residency requirement: in order to stand for election, a mayoral candidate must reside in the municipality.

Prior to 2013, the City of Beloit, which operates under a council-manager system, had a residency requirement in place through city ordinances that applied to the city manager as well as certain other management positions. The 2013 Biennial Budget (WI Act 20) included a blanket prohibition on residency requirements for municipal employees, and the City of Beloit was forced to repeal its ordinance.

“When I ran for the State Assembly, I promised to advocate for local control,” Rep. Spreitzer said. “This bill is about restoring a small piece of that local control so that the next time Beloit or another community hires a city manager, local elected officials can decide whether residency is important.”

The proposal has garnered broad bipartisan support, with Rep. Jeremy Thiesfeldt (R-Fond du Lac) co-authoring the Assembly bill with Rep. Spreitzer, and Senators Janis Ringhand (D-

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Evansville) and Rick Gudex (R-Fond du Lac) co-authoring the Senate version. In all, thirteen Democrats and nine Republicans have signed on as authors and co-authors of the AB 262.

On Friday, June 5, Assembly Bill 262 was referred to the Assembly Committee on Urban and Local Affairs.

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