



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

101 East Wilson Street, Room 219, Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Voice: 608/266-7826 Fax: 608/267-3906

Date: October 8, 2014

To: Senator Alberta Darling, Chair
Representative John Nygren, Chair
Members, Joint Committee on Finance

Re: Public Information Campaign – Voter ID Requirements

We write with a sense of urgency regarding the need to educate voters with disabilities about new election requirements prior to the November general election. The decision by the Joint Committee on Finance to delay appropriation to funds for a statewide public education campaign is extremely concerning for our population.

Statewide member organizations of the Survival Coalition report confusion about the new identification requirements and are concerned that the already low voter engagement rates for individuals (statistically 5 to 15 percent below people without disabilities) will be negatively impacted. Specifically our members report dramatically increased calls to information and referral centers about this issue.

The fact that the voter photo identification issue has already been well-publicized in the general media does not address our concerns as we know that people with disabilities require much more detailed information and support during this short timeframe. Media coverage until now has reported only basic information that a new law is in effect and the controversy surrounding that decision. For many people with disabilities obtaining a photo ID will be a time-consuming and costly process (for those who have to arrange and pay for transportation) with the potential for many glitches and barriers. Calls into DMV offices statewide also demonstrate that staff is not prepared for the types of questions people with disabilities may pose.

While the Committee's October 3 letter indicates that the Government Accountability Board should proceed in conducting a campaign by spending general program operations funds and subsequently request reimbursement we understand from media reports that the Legislature does not endorse this proposal, and thus GAB does not have confidence to conduct a comprehensive campaign as originally planned. This will undoubtedly impact the level of awareness level of people with disabilities.

We respectfully request that members of the committee:

- Immediately reconsider the decision to appropriate additional funds to GAB and assure access to the \$460,000 that has been authorized by the Legislature in 2013 Act 20.
- Immediately call a press conference with GAB to draw statewide attention to the specifics of ID requirements and to publicize the state's new ***Bring it to the Ballot*** website: <http://www.bringit.wi.gov/> - which has received little exposure to date.

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.

Thank you for hearing and addressing these concerns.

Survival Co-Chairs:

Maureen Ryan, moryan@charter.net; (608) 444-3842;
Beth Swedeen, beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov; (608) 266-1166;
Kristin M. Kerschensteiner, kitk@drwi.org; (608) 267-0214

Real Lives, Real Work, Real Smart, Wisconsin
Investing in People with Disabilities

Survival Coalition is comprised of more than 30 statewide disability organizations that advocate and support policies and practices that lead to the full inclusion, participation, and contribution of people living with disability.