Don't make it harder for our vote to count

For Immediate Release

Press Contacts: Beth Swedeen, beth.swedeen@wisconsin.gov; (608) 220-2924;

Kristin M. Kerschensteiner, kitk@drwi.org; (608) 267-0214;

Patti Becker, beckerp@clanet.org; (608) 242-8335

Today the Joint Committee for Review of Administrative Rules (JCRAR) rejected the Wisconsin Election Commission's emergency rule 2209 to clarify the kinds of minor clerical errors election clerks can correct on absentee ballots and should be adopted. This rule would have formalized existing election practices.

"Errors are not voter fraud; they are common mistakes," said Kit Kerschensteiner, Survival Coalition Co-Chair. "Minor technicalities, like a missing city or zip code on a witness address, are easily corrected, and should not result in an absentee voter's ballot being discounted."

Wisconsin's professional nonpartisan election clerks have local knowledge and common sense, and they currently monitor and correct these mistakes. This practice has been accepted for years and has worked for countless past elections.

Many people with disabilities, older adults, and other Wisconsin residents rely on absentee ballots to access their right to vote.

"Many people with disabilities and older adults don't drive," said Patti Becker, Survival Co-Chair. "Uncertainty about availability of caregivers and transportation means people do not know from one day to the next if they will be able to leave the house for important activities, such as voting."

Analysis of past elections shows absentee voting is used by a significant number of voters ever election, with more than 20% of voters voting absentee in general presidential year elections.

Increasing the odds that small mistakes will result in absentee ballots not being counted disproportionately harms voters with disabilities and older adult voters.

"Don't' make it harder for voters with disabilities to count," said Beth Swedeen, Survival Co-Chair. "The rights and the voices of the disability community matter."