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LWVWI Opposition to AB599 and SB597

AB 599/SB 597 proposes that all voters can automatically receive absentee ballots for every election as long as photo identification is provided and kept current. However, a significant flaw in the bill is the *elimination of the status of the "indefinitely confined" voter*.

An "indefinitely confined" voter is an elector who is indefinitely confined due to age, physical illness, infirmity or disability for an indefinite period of time. Since 1975, Wisconsin election law has exempted these voters from the burden of obtaining a photo ID because of their health status. Instead, the signature of the witness on the absentee ballot has satisfied the photo ID requirement in addition to the requirement of a signed statement attesting to their indefinitely confined health status.

AB 599 would require indefinitely confined voters to obtain photo identification in order to vote by absentee ballot; however, the bill *does nothing to address the barriers* these voters would likely encounter to secure a photo ID. And, although the bill allows an authorized disability advocate to assist in transmitting a copy of the indefinitely confined voter's photo ID to a municipal clerk in order to automatically receive absentee ballots, there is no funding provided for this support.

In summary, AB 599 discriminates against indefinitely confined voters who, because of age, physical illness, infirmity or disability, would likely encounter significant obstacles in obtaining a photo ID. Examples of barriers would include: limited access to accessible transportation, long lines and limited hours of the DMV, long commutes to the DMV especially in rural areas, limited time/access to licensed care providers and/or advocates, and others too numerous to list here.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin **OPPOSES AB 599/SB 597** because it violates the League's positions to maximize voter participation and reject burdensome requirements, such as photo ID. Specifically, the bill eliminates the League's long-held stance that "indefinitely confined" voters receive permanent, automatic absentee status. Therefore, should the legislature pass this bill, the League would support a veto by Governor Evers.