

To: Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections
From: Disability Rights Wisconsin (Contact: Lisa Hassenstab, Public Policy Manager, lisah@drwi.org)
Date: February 4, 2025
Re: CR 24-032, to create Chapter EL 4, relating to the conduct, regulation, and accommodation of election observers

Thank you for the opportunity to share written comments on CR 24-032. Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW) appreciated the opportunity to serve on the advisory committee for this rule and is pleased to support the rule as presented.

DRW affirms the value of this rule's intent to "clarify and bring uniformity to election observation for the benefit of voters, election officials, and observers". Key in this from DRW's perspective is ensuring equity and access for participants in the election process, including observers, who have disabilities. This proposed rule includes several practices to ensure this equity and access, and DRW believes adequate implementation of these practices will be beneficial for all participants in the electoral process.

Of primary interest to DRW:

4.03 Conduct of Election Officials: (1)(c) and (3) ensure the accessibility of the observation area, including access to any available chair within the observable location and with the same access to restrooms available to election officials at the observable location. DRW has heard reports of observers being denied access to chairs and restrooms, which could effectively eliminate access to some observers with disabilities. Providing clarity on expectations of accessibility will provide needed clarity to all election officials.

4.05 Location specific requirements: (4)(c), (d), and (e) ensure voters maintain privacy and safety when observers are present during absentee voting in residential care facilities and retirement homes. DRW has received reports of observers refusing to comply with facility requirements in place to protect the health and safety of residents and has received questions from facilities regarding observers' ability to enter resident rooms; this rule will provide necessary parameters to protect resident rights.

Thank you for consideration of these comments and, as always, please don't hesitate to reach out with questions.