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## **Public Hearing: AJR 76 & SJR 71**

Good Morning, Mr. Chair & Members of the Committees:

I'm Jamie Lynn Crofts, the Policy Director for Wisconsin Voices. Wisconsin Voices is a statewide nonpartisan nonprofit organization focused on protecting democracy, building community, and teaching advocacy. I'm here today to ask you to vote no on AJR 76.

Federal law already bans noncitizens from voting in federal elections, and I don't think anyone in this room seriously believes that noncitizens are going to gain the right to vote at the state level in Wisconsin — which has not happened in any state in the country — any time in the remotely near future. So what we are really talking about here is local elections.

Decisions made at the local government level are generally the things that impact most people's lives the most directly. Things like what happens in our public schools, garbage pick-up, road upkeep and public transportation, public health, and public safety affect all members of a community, not only U.S. citizens.

Demonstrating the incredibly local nature of these decisions, local measures allowing noncitizens to vote are tailored differently depending on the issue they are addressing. For example, some municipalities permit noncitizens to vote in school board elections, but only if they are a parent of a child within the school district. Others limit the right to vote to lawful permanent residents. Still others are more broad.

Critically, all of these measures were adopted at the *local* level to address the needs of a *local* community.

It is overreach for the state to limit local government in this way. Immigrants pay taxes, send their children to our schools, and are members of our communities and our society — whether or not they're citizens. If the voters in a particular municipality want to allow, for example, green card holders with children in public schools to vote in in school board elections, is that really something we need a constitutional amendment to prevent? Why is a ban on green card holders voting in the most local elections something we need to mandate from the state level?



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Noncitizen voting is also a part of American history. Both before and after the American Revolution, all property-owning white men could vote, without regard to citizenship status. The movement against non-citizen voting really only took hold after the Civil War, as a response to the influx of new Catholic and Jewish immigrants, who politicians viewed as less educated and responsible than the predominantly white Protestant immigrants who had arrived earlier. Not coincidentally, this movement also coincided with the proliferation of Jim Crow laws attacking the rights of recently enfranchised Black Americans.

We should leave it up to local communities to decide whether or not they want to allow noncitizens to vote in their local elections. What could possibly be a more local issue than this?

Please, vote no on AJR 78.

Thank you.