



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN
EDUCATION FUND**

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To: All Wisconsin State Senators and Assembly Representatives

Re: Remove bail bondsmen provision from the State Budget

In 1979 the state of Wisconsin abolished the practice of commercial bail bonds after open discussion and debate by the legislature and with support from officials in the criminal justice system. It was decided that a better quality of justice would be maintained by a judge deciding appropriate release or detention from a full range of pretrial information on which to base public safety and flight risk. In considering pre-trial release, the courts now have a range of bail options from Personal Recognizance to full cash amount for whatever the situation warrants.

Wisconsin was the fourth state to ban commercial bonds (following Illinois, Oregon and Kentucky) because it promoted a system of pretrial release based primarily on money and those who could afford it. Unfortunately that system promoted recurring instances of corruption. Indeed it continues in other places; in 2010 a federal judge was removed for kickback involvement with bail bondsmen.

For these reasons, the League of Women Voters finds the action of the Joint Finance Committee inserting the re-establishment of bail bondsmen in the State Budget document highly inappropriate. There was no prior information, public hearing or testimony regarding this action which has such an impact on the criminal justice system.

We urge both Senators and Representatives to remove this item from the budget. We support Mr. John Chisholm, Milwaukee County District Attorney, in his call for "an informed, open and honest debate" on this proposal.