



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF  
WISCONSIN

612 W. Main Street, #200  
Madison, WI 53703-4714

(608) 256-0827  
<http://www.lwwwi.org>

May 19, 2015

To: Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections

Re: Opposition to AB 189

The League of Women Voters applauds efforts to use technology to make voter registration more accessible and/or improve the accuracy of our statewide voter registration system (SVRS), which is the best tool for reducing errors and increasing election integrity. However, we have to oppose this bill as it is currently written.

Multi-state database checking to identify the names of people who have moved or died and need to be removed from the database is one way to improve the accuracy of our voter rolls. However, the League believes that any purging of voter rolls needs to be done in a manner that is transparent, accurate and legal. The Interstate Voter Registration Crosscheck program fails to meet all of those standards.

There are a couple of multi-state database checking services currently in use. The League of Women Voters has found that one of these is far more reliable than the other – and that can make the difference between a service that improves our poll books and one that disenfranchises qualified voters and wastes local government funds.

Some 28 states have joined the Interstate Voter Registration Crosscheck Program run by Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, but some including Florida and Oregon, have discontinued use of this program because they have found it did not meet their needs. There are a number of problems with the approach Crosscheck uses for data matching. It relies primarily on the voter's first and last names and birthdate. You would be surprised how many "false positives" that formula can generate!

While it does not cost states anything to join Crosscheck, the program is quite labor intensive for election officials. With any program there will be costs related to mailing letters to people who appear to be registered in more than one state. With Crosscheck, there will be many more such letters than with a more precise matching program.

And there is a significant cost to those eligible voters who are incorrectly targeted by this program, and who then have to prove they are qualified to vote.

Another service, the Election Registration Information System (ERIC), is facilitated by PEW Charitable Trusts, but is owned by about a dozen participating states. This data-matching exchange interfaces with records held by the DMV, U.S. Postal Service (change of address records) and Social Security Administration to identify voters who have moved or died. It is more technologically advanced and accurate than Crosscheck, as well as more transparent in its process.

There is a cost to join ERIC, but according to a GAB staff memo, member states benefit from a more efficient and effective data matching and cleaner voter rolls. Local governments don't have to waste time and money dealing with thousands of false positives.

Best of all, ERIC has identified millions of potential new voters who are not yet registered, and participating states have invited them to do so. About 5 percent of those contacted have registered and now have a voice in the future of their states and nation.

If Wisconsin is going to join a multi-state data-matching exchange, it should be a reliable, transparent program that ensures accuracy and helps the state engage more qualified citizens as voters.

If you want to pass legislation that requires Wisconsin to enter a multi-state voter database matching program, we recommend that you not tie the state down to one particular program. Certainly don't require the state to join a program that is known to generate many false positives, which could result in a large number of provisional ballots and even disenfranchise some voters.

We oppose this legislation as it is currently written and urge you to do the same.

Thank you.