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March 14, 2019

To: Assembly Judiciary Committee

Re: Opposition to AB 25/SB 29

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin supports a system of justice that assures adults and juveniles equal treatment before the law. We oppose AB25/SB29 because we believe it will undermine that assurance.

While providing the opportunity for pro bono assistance to charitable institutions or organizations by lawyers is highly commendable, we do not think it is appropriate for District Attorneys, Deputy DAs or Assistant DAs. Public officials serve everyone in the public and there are certain standards that must be maintained to serve all of the public.

Allowing the opportunity for these officials to give free assistance to organizations or individuals could certainly raise the perception of favoritism or conflict of interest with the public. This weakens the belief in the assurance of equal treatment. In continuing to prohibit engagement in civil law or pro bono work, we protect the officials from any perception of impropriety and maintain the integrity of their offices. At a time when our public offices are being viewed with suspicion this is an important protection.

We applaud the encouragement of the law profession for its members to provide pro bono services for charitable organizations. This, however, is not appropriate for District Attorneys, Deputy DAs or Assistant DAs.

We oppose SB29/AB25 and ask you to oppose it as well.