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January 8, 2022

To: Assembly Committee on Constitution and Ethics
From: League of Women Voters of Wisconsin
Re: Opposition to AJR 54 / SJR 32

The authors of this bill propose to amend the state constitution to require individuals to be citizens of the United States to vote. This requirement is already implicit in Article III Section 1 which states: "Every United States citizen age 18 or older who is a resident of an election district in this state is a qualified elector of that district." The amendment would replace "every" with "only a", and it adds a clause specifying that the requirement would apply to all statewide and local elections.

While this might appear to be a minor change that would have no current effect, it actually could result in the loss of the right to vote for many qualified citizens. After all, if it had no effect it would not be worth the taxpayer expense needed for a statewide referendum.

The authors provide no guidance to election administrators on how citizenship would be determined. Will the current oath that citizens sign upon registration suffice, or will an individual will have to prove citizenship when they register and potentially every time they cast a ballot? In other states that have passed such measures, the enforcement around proof of citizenship is often discriminatory, targeting people of color.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin opposes AJR 54 because it would create an unnecessary and in many cases unfair burden on voters, and it could easily lead to discriminatory enforcement.