



DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS
JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

February 28, 2017

Senator Alberta Darling
Room 317 East
Wisconsin State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Representative John Nygren
Room 309 East
Wisconsin State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Nygren:

We are writing to ask that you schedule a Joint Finance Committee 13.10 session to address the Wisconsin Elections Commission's (WEC's) request to restore 3.0 FTE staff positions, two of which would focus on election security issues. It is our understanding that the WEC is only requesting position authority and not additional funds for the biennium. We need you to act quickly and schedule the WEC's request as soon as possible.

We hope you recognize that their current staffing level is unsustainable. Over the last two budgets, the WEC staff has been reduced by 28%. We desperately need secure elections, and a failure to provide the WEC with the authority for the staff they need will continue to leave Wisconsin vulnerable to interference by foreign government actors or parties, especially in advance of the 2018 elections.

It has been confirmed that "Russian government cyber actors" targeted Wisconsin's voter registration system and/or other state agencies as a means of compromising our elections. To be effective, the state must coordinate with its federal and local election partners. Security concerns are especially acute in Wisconsin, where elections are run locally by 1,853 municipal clerks, creating many opportunities for breaches. According to outgoing WEC Administrator Michael Hass, "[w]e are running out of time for the positions to be of significant help to the agency, clerks, or voters prior to the fall election cycle."

The Joint Finance Committee not only already agreed that these positions were necessary during the budget process, but voted to provide the Elections Commission with additional positions above and beyond the three they are now requesting. We hope you do not stand in the way of the authority for the additional positions, so that the WEC can make sure security measures can be successfully implemented as soon as possible – the validity of Wisconsin's elections hangs in the balance.

Thank you for your timely response to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Sen. Lena Taylor
4th Senate District

Sen. Jon Erpenbach
27th Senate District

Rep. Chris Taylor
76th Assembly District

Rep. Katrina Shankland
71st Assembly District