



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Rep. Hebl, Sen. Smith Circulate Constitutional Amendment to Give Wisconsin Citizens a Direct Voice

(MADISON) – Today Representative Gary Hebl (D- Sun Prairie) and Sen. Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick) circulated LRB-4951, a constitutional amendment that will give more power to the citizens of Wisconsin by enabling them to veto legislatively-passed laws at the ballot box.

In order to get a citizen veto referendum on the ballot, signatures equaling 4% of the total votes of the most recent gubernatorial election must be collected. If Wisconsin voters then reject the law, it may not be reenacted during the same legislative biennium in which it was rejected, which will prevent the Legislature from circumventing the will of the people.

“We as legislators are accountable to the people of our state,” Rep. Gary Hebl said. “If voters believe legislators are passing legislation that is not in the best interest of Wisconsinites, the people should absolutely have the power to say ‘No.’ This constitutional amendment allows just that.”

LRB-4951 also creates a method for citizens to propose their own laws and constitutional amendments. Only a fraction of laws proposed by legislators get a public hearing, let alone receive a floor vote or get passed into law. Sensible legislation can and does stall if the party in power – be it Republicans or Democrats – refuses to act on it. LRB-04961 allows citizens to bypass partisan inaction and take their case straight to the people of Wisconsin.

“For too long, the Legislature’s gerrymandered Majority has sidestepped popular proposals supported by an overwhelming number of Wisconsinites,” said Sen. Jeff Smith. “If legislative leaders are unwilling to change their ways, Wisconsinites should be able to take action into their own hands while at the ballot box. This constitutional amendment is another way we can ensure lawmakers reflect the will of the people.”

Proposing a law or constitutional amendment would take signatures equaling 6% and 8%, respectively, of the total vote in the most recent gubernatorial election. If voters then approve citizen-led legislation at the ballot box, it cannot be repealed or amended by the legislature for two years after it goes into effect. After that two year period, the law can only be changed with two-thirds majorities in both the State Assembly and State Senate. Any law passed by the people of Wisconsin is also not subject to a veto from the Governor.

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