



Board of Election Commissioners

Commissioners
Allen E. Campos
Robert F. Spindell, Jr.
Victoria L. Toliver
Executive Director
Susan M. Edman

September 13, 2005

The Honorable Common Council
City of Milwaukee
Room 205 City Hall
200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Common Council Members:

I am writing requesting your support for Common Council Resolution No. 050510 that relates to the introduction of state legislation on election reform. As you are well aware, the City Election Task Force made several recommendations that require legislative action. Common Council Resolution No. 050510 lays the groundwork for election reform in Milwaukee. The following is a brief synopsis of the five statutory changes that are critical to the Election Commission's success in ensuring efficient, well-run elections.

1. Prohibit the compensation of deputy registrars based on the number of registration cards completed.

Many voter registration groups compensate deputy registrars based on the number of voters they register. This prohibition will eliminate the financial incentive to cheat by forging signatures or registering the same voter multiple times.

2. Establish an earlier "cut-off" date for voter pre-registration of 21 to 29 days prior to an election, in lieu of the current 13-day deadline.

Massive voter registration drives make it extremely difficult for the Election Commission to manage enormous surges of voter registration cards associated with peak elections. Changing the deadline would greatly reduce delays and errors in processing voter registration cards and ensure more accurate poll lists.

3. Allow electors to vote by absentee ballot at a "satellite location."

Current law requires that absentee voting occur at the Office of the City Clerk (City Hall). The "confines" of the Election Commission Office make it extremely difficult to expeditiously process voters. A "satellite" location would allow Commission personnel to process more than one voter at a time.

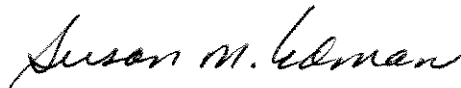
4. Allow for the processing of absentee ballots at a “satellite” location rather than at the polls. Absentee ballots are currently sent to the Election Commission Office where they are sorted by ward. On Election Day, these ballots are delivered to the respective polling locations by couriers where they are recorded and processed. Centralized processing would lower the costs and confusion associated with the absentee voting process.

5. Advance the statutory deadline for voter submittal of absentee ballot request applications to at least 7 days prior to the election in lieu of the current deadline of 5 p.m. on the Friday prior to an election.

The current dateline does not allow enough time for the elector to receive their ballot and return it in time for processing. Election Commission staff work after hours on the Friday before an election to process absentee ballot requests that come in. These ballots are then delivered to the U.S. Post Office. Many electors will not receive their ballot until Monday, one day before the election. This does not allow adequate time (for delivery and processing) if the elector chooses to return their ballot by mail.

I trust this has brought clarification to the issues addressed in Common Council Resolution No. 050510. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office at extension 6119.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Edman
Executive Director