
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

July 18, 2011

Ald. Terry L. Witkowski
(414) 731-0472

Council File Would Spur Tracking of Voter ID Law Impact

Measure also directs Election Commission to inform residents about changes and requirements brought about by new law

The Common Council's **Judiciary and Legislation Committee** will consider a file today that would direct the Election Commission to begin tracking the number of city resident ballots not counted during elections – and the reason or reasons why those ballots were not counted.

The committee meets at 1:30 p.m. today (Monday, July 18) in room 301-B at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.

Alderman Terry L. Witkowski, the primary sponsor the resolution (Council file #110204), said the legislation specifically directs the Election Commission to issue a report to the Common Council (no later than 60 days after each election) detailing the numbers of individuals who submitted ballots that were not counted. The report of ballots not counted shall be made as soon as practicable when figures or reasonable estimates are available and shall include the reason or reasons that ballots were not counted. The Election Commission will also be required to notify all voters whose ballots were not counted.

“It is important for the City of Milwaukee to keep track of how many ballots are not counted – and why they weren't counted – because the city can then analyze the causes and make plans to combat those problems or shortcomings with an eye to changing the law,” Alderman Witkowski said.

“We also want to give people the means to come forward if their vote was not counted,” Alderman Witkowski said. “The information we gather can help us identify if anyone was denied the right to vote because of this new law and such data can help us change these restrictions if need be.”

-More-

Voter ID /ADD ONE

The resolution also directs the Election Commission to cooperate with the Public Information Division of the Common Council - City Clerk's Office to mount efforts to make city residents aware of changes in state requirements for voter registration and voter identification. The resolution specifically directs the Election Commission to inform electors and potential electors that their ballots may not be counted if required proof of identification and residency is not submitted in accordance with the requirements of 2011 Wisconsin Act 23, enacted May 25, 2011 and effective on June 10, 2011.

Alderman Witkowski said the resolution directs the Election Commission to advise city residents to report problems or irregularity or difficulties in voting, especially problems that may result in uncounted ballots. "I believe our residents are the best 'eyes and ears' we have at the polling locations and in the community, and we're asking them to report what they're seeing," he said.

"We must be vigilant about doing all we can to ensure that no voters are disenfranchised by this new law. This is one of many actions we can take to help protect voters' rights," Alderwoman Coggs, co-sponsor of the resolution said.

The "Voter ID" law -- 2011 Wisconsin Act 23 (Act 23) -- revised state election laws relating to: requiring identification to vote at a polling place or to obtain an absentee ballot; absentee voting; late voter registration; proof of residence; a requirement that electors provide signatures when voting in person at an election; the duration and location of residency for voting purposes; and other matters.

The nonpartisan Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau estimates that the costs to the state over the 2011-2013 biennium for implementation of Act 23 will be \$7 million, including lost revenue resulting from the issuance of free voter identification cards to qualified individuals. The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board also estimates that it will require \$2.1 million to initially upgrade state computer programs, train poll workers and provide public education.

Go to <http://milwaukee.legistar.com/Legislation> to see more details on Council file #110204