



MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight

FROM: Sarah Diedrick-Kasdorf, Deputy Director of Government Affairs

DATE: November 6, 2019

SUBJECT: Support for Assembly Bill 310

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) supports Assembly Bill 310, which ensures local government referenda are held at the lowest possible cost to local taxpayers and results in maximum citizen participation in the election process.

Under current law, local governments have the ability to exceed levy limits via voter approval at referendum. In an odd-numbered year, a local government may call a special election to hold the referendum. In an even-numbered year, however, the referendum must be held during the spring primary or general election or partisan primary or fall general election.

Unfortunately, due to the referendum question being statutorily prescribed—and requiring net new construction numbers not available until mid-August—it is impossible for local governments to hold a referendum anytime in the spring or during the fall primary. It is also incredibly difficult to hold the referendum during the fall general election due to timelines associated with adopting local budgets and the need to mail property tax bills in mid-December. As a result, current law may force local governments to hold costly special elections, where voter participation is significantly less than a general election.

Assembly Bill 310 simply removes the statutory requirement that a referendum question include final net new construction figures and instead allows for use of a county's best estimate. This technical change will make it easier for local governments to hold referenda during regularly scheduled elections, as opposed to calling a costly special election where citizens are less likely to participate.

WCA respectfully requests your support for Assembly Bill 310.

Thank you for considering our comments.