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To: Chairman Steven Johnson and House Taxation Committee
From: Katie Schroeder, City Attorney, City of Beloit
Subject: Written Testimony In Favor of House Bill 2376

Thank you Chairman and Committee for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of House Bill 2376 which would provide for an election driven by a protest petition when a city or county's budget increases beyond the tax lid amount. The City of Beloit is in favor of this proposed legislation for many reasons.

The current law contains election provisions which are incomplete, should a local governing body vote to raise its budget beyond the tax lid amount. There is little direction as to how these elections are to be implemented. More than likely, because of the timing of the budget, a special election would have to be held. These special elections are quite costly for small cities.

The current mandatory election requirement is in place regardless of the reason for the increase in the budget over the tax lid amount. We believe elections should not be mandatory when the budget is increased for things such as public safety expenses, health insurance expenses, or the repair of aged and crumbling infrastructure. A protest petition driven election corrects this problem.

A protest petition driven election replaces the incomplete yet mandatory election requirement with a structured process that is discretionary with the electors. The protest petition election would allow our city officials to have an opportunity to explain and educate its taxpayers regarding the need to increase the budget beyond the tax lid limits.

An election driven by a protest petition still places power in the hands of the taxpayer. The taxpayers still have the opportunity to oppose a budget increase over the tax lid amount. The change from a mandatory election to a protest petition election would likely greatly reduce costs to local governments, because special elections would only be held when petitioned by taxpayers.

Over the past several years, our city's budget has been impacted by an increase in employee benefit expenses, an increase in expenses for public safety including officer training, evaluations for mentally ill arrestees, body cameras, etc, an increase in expenses to repair aging city infrastructure, and numerous unfunded mandates. The proposed legislation for an election driven by protest petition provides our local government with the flexibility necessary to effectively budget and pay for the expenses essential to keep our city moving forward.

For these reasons, I ask that Committee vote in favor of House Bill 2376. Thank you for your consideration.

Very Truly Yours,



Katie J. Schroeder

Beloit City Attorney