The BADASS Bill

Ballot Access, Democracy, And Suffrage Statute

A plan to open Wisconsin's elections, get big money out, and make every vote count.

Wisconsin makes it hard to get on the ballot, easy to hide big money, and lets district maps pick winners before you vote. The Ballot Access, Democracy, and Suffrage Statute rewrites those rules so ordinary people can run, donors can't buy the outcome, and the Legislature reflects how people actually voted. Pete Karas drafted it as model legislation for his 2026 Secretary of State campaign.

By the numbers

1,200 max	Signatures to run statewide, down from thousands
6 to 1	Public match on every small-dollar donation
PAC · corporate · union	Banned from giving to candidates
11 three-member districts	State Senate elected proportionally by Single Transferable Vote
public	Voting-machine source code and vendor contracts
automatic, opt-out	Voter registration at the DMV and other agencies

Open the ballot

Running for statewide office today can take thousands of signatures. BADASS caps it at 1,200 for statewide, 450 for state Senate, 150 for Assembly, and stretches the filing window to as long as 120 days. Anyone 18 or older can circulate papers, repealing the 2025 residency ban. Ballot order gets drawn by lot, so no one rides to the top on party or incumbency. A party holds its ballot line at 1% of the statewide vote, and filing fees come back once a candidate qualifies.

Get the money out

BADASS bans PAC, Super PAC, corporate, and union checks to candidates. It creates the Wisconsin Democracy Fund, seeded with at least $5 million a year plus a voluntary $5 tax checkoff. Small donations of $5 to $150 get matched six to one, so a $50 gift turns into $350 for the campaign. Individual givers are capped at $2,000 statewide, and candidates who take the match accept hard spending limits. Every donation over $200 posts to a public database within 72 hours, and dark-money groups spending over $5,000 have to name their donors.

Make the count verifiable

The source code inside Wisconsin's voting machines becomes public, and so do vendor contracts. After every general election, county clerks run a hand-counted risk-limiting audit in public, sized to catch a wrong result with 95% confidence. No race is certified until the audits check out.

Expand the vote

Eligible residents get registered automatically when they deal with the DMV or another state agency, unless they opt out. People with felony convictions keep the right to vote, in or out of prison, and get told so in writing at intake and release. Communities where 5% speak another language get election materials in that language. A nonpartisan civic-education program, funded at $1 million a year, runs a plain-language voter portal and mails a welcome kit to every new voter.

Make the Legislature represent people

Today a party can win 40% of the statewide vote and a sliver of the seats. BADASS turns the 33 single-member Senate districts into 11 three-member districts elected by Single Transferable Vote, a proportional method where roughly

25% of the vote wins a seat. It moves through both a proposed constitutional amendment and immediate statutory implementation. The Assembly stays single-member. Maps get drawn by the nonpartisan Legislative Reference Bureau, barred from looking at incumbency, party, or past election results. Separately, any city or county can adopt ranked-choice voting for local races, with the state covering the cost.

Who runs elections

BADASS abolishes the Wisconsin Elections Commission and the Ethics Commission and brings back the Government Accountability Board: eight retired judges, nominated by the chief judges of the four Court of Appeals districts, confirmed by the Senate, serving staggered six-year terms and shielded from party control. The Secretary of State gets no election duties under the bill.

What it means for you

If you've thought about running, fewer signatures, a returned filing fee, public matching money, and spending caps that keep a self-funder from drowning you out.

If you vote, automatic registration, machines and contracts you can inspect, audits you can watch, and a Senate that mirrors how the whole state voted.

If you've been told a conviction cost you your vote, it no longer does.

The whole bill, article by article

I Government Accountability Board and findings
II Ballot access reform
III Election technology transparency
IV Ranked-choice voting pilot for local races
V Public financing of elections
VI Civic education and voter outreach
VII Campaign finance transparency
VIII Implementation and administration
IX Proportional Senate by Single Transferable Vote
X Summary of key provisions

Why a Secretary of State candidate? The office can't pass this alone. A Secretary of State has almost no lawmaking power, which is exactly why a vote for Pete carries no spoiler risk. It puts these reforms on the table and shows how many Wisconsinites want them there. Read the full bill at PeteKaras.com.