

State of Wisconsin
Office of the Governor

December 11, 2009

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE: I am vetoing Senate Bill 223 in its entirety. The bill divides the state's counties into seven geographical districts and requires that at least one citizen member of the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents be appointed from each district. The requirement takes effect on January 1, 2012.

SB 223

Of the 18 Board of Regent members authorized under current law, four are specifically prescribed by statute: the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the President of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board and two student members appointed by the Governor. Along with the statutorily prescribed members, the remaining 14 citizen members are appointed by the Governor to lead a world class higher education system that spans the entire state and includes two doctoral campuses, 11 four-year comprehensive campuses, 13 two-year campuses and the statewide University of Wisconsin Extension.

SB 223

The Governor is responsible for appointing Regents who are committed to efficient and effective management of the University of Wisconsin System as a whole. Senate Bill 223 would undermine the unified strength and efficiency of the System by requiring governors to appoint half of the citizen regents based on district of residency. This bill would encourage the appointment of regents whose primary job is to advocate narrowly for the needs of campuses located in their home districts rather than to address how to most efficiently and effectively serve the broader expectations of Wisconsin's taxpayers, businesses and students. I am concerned that enacting this requirement will lead to increased duplication of programs among campuses that, while providing some convenience for students attending a specific campus, will significantly increase the cost to taxpayers. Furthermore, it will hamper the board's ability to eliminate underutilized programs, reallocate resources between campuses and address the evolving educational needs of our workforce.

SB 223

In addition, the bill assumes that the existing regent appointment process has served to disadvantage campuses located in the northwest or southwest portions of the state. However, system data indicate that state funding for these campuses as a percent of their total budgets slightly exceeds the statewide average for the 11 comprehensive campuses and significantly exceeds the levels provided to the Madison and Milwaukee campuses.

SB 223

I understand the arguments of supporters of this legislation that requiring geographical representation on the Board of Regents will ensure that the needs of individual campuses will not be overlooked in the budget and policy development process. However, the flexibility in making appointments provided to governors under current law has helped create and maintain one of the best higher education systems in the world without sacrificing the quality of any of the University of Wisconsin's 27 campuses.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM DOYLE