

Under current Wisconsin law, when there is a vacancy in the State Senate or Assembly, the Governor is directed to call a special election to fill the vacancy, yet state law is silent on the amount of time that can elapse between vacancy and election. Today, State Representative Mark Pocan and State Senator-Elect Jennifer Shilling circulated a bill amongst their colleagues that would require the Governor to call a special election within 60 days of the vacancy.

Under the proposed bill, the Governor would be required to order an election within 60 days after the vacancy occurs. Current law, which requires the Governor to select an election date within 62 and 77 days after he orders an election, would remain in place under this bill.

On January 3, 2011, Representatives Huebsch, Gottlieb and Gunderson each resigned their seats after receiving appointments from Governor Walker. Walker called for the special elections to fill these vacancies February 23, 2011 and the elections were held May 3, 2011. Representative Joe Parisi resigned his seat April 14, 2011 and Walker called for a special election May 24, 2011. Parisi's seat was filled August 9, 2011. A fifth special election will be needed to fill Shilling's La Crosse, Wisconsin Assembly seat after she was recently elected to the State Senate in a recall election.