



## Wisconsin State Senate

State Capitol  
PO Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Wisconsin State Senate,

We, the undersigned individuals, are Wisconsin-based media leaders, journalists, academic experts, funders, and advocates who are committed to building the robust local news and information system our state needs and deserves. Amid the many threats facing our communities, it's more clear than ever that our right to free speech is under attack.

Unfortunately, Wisconsin is one of only eleven states left in the country that doesn't have an anti-slapp law. Anti-SLAPP laws protect people from strategic lawsuits against public participation, also known as SLAPP suits. SLAPP suits can be used against individuals and organizations to intimidate and silence public critiques. Plaintiffs bring expensive legal proceedings against defendants, who are then forced to rack up exorbitant legal fees defending themselves against baseless charges.

**In late 2025, state lawmakers introduced new anti-SLAPP bills that adopt the [Uniform Public Expression Protection Act \(UPEPA\)](#) to protect journalists and ordinary community members from these lawsuits.**

In recent years, Wisconsin journalists, community members, and small nonprofit outlets have faced costly legal threats in response to reporting or speaking out on matters of public concern. Even when courts ultimately dismiss these cases, defendants can spend months — or years — defending themselves and incurring tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees. For small outlets and individual residents, that financial strain alone can have a chilling effect, discouraging watchdog reporting and civic participation.

If it passes, Wisconsin would adopt the Uniform Public Expression Protection Act framework, allowing a person sued in a SLAPP suit to file a motion to strike the lawsuit if it arises from their constitutional right of petition or free speech in connection with a public issue. In addition, if a defendant prevails on a special motion to strike, a court must award it all court costs and legal



fees. With the introduction of this legislation, Wisconsin is taking the first steps toward better protecting its journalists and members of the public from these harmful suits.

**That's why we're urging the Wisconsin State Senate to advance SB 666, a key piece of legislation to protect free speech and members of the public from these frivolous suits. The Assembly has passed its version of the bill with broad bipartisan support – and now the Senate must act.**

We firmly believe that this bill is a strong solution to threats against the First Amendment in Wisconsin. By advancing this piece of legislation, lawmakers would be making a wise nonpartisan investment in protecting the speech and civic health of the commonwealth while laying the groundwork for a sustainable, community-rooted local news ecosystem.

We greatly appreciate your interest in this critical issue, and we look forward to working with you and other lawmakers in the legislature to advance this much-needed bill.

Sincerely,

***Arin Anderson** — Wisconsin Civic Media Campaign Manager, **Free Press Action***

***Bill Lueders** — President, **Freedom of Information Council***

***Jim Malewitz** — Managing Editor, **Wisconsin Watch***

***Tim Hundt** — Managing Editor and Publisher, **Vernon Reporter***

***Chuck Corra** — Associate Director, Policy and Advocacy, **LION Publishers***

***Amanda Merkwae** — Advocacy Director, **ACLU-WI***

***Peter Cameron** — Managing Editor, **The Badger Project***

***Jessica McBride** — Co-founder, **Wisconsin Right Now***

***Shereen Siewert** — Founder and Publisher, **Wausau Pilot & Review***

***Denise Lockwood** — CEO, **Racine County Eye***

***Steve Hanson** — Publisher, **Eye on Dunn County***

***Andrew Phillips** — Executive Director and Editor-in-Chief, **Door County Knock***

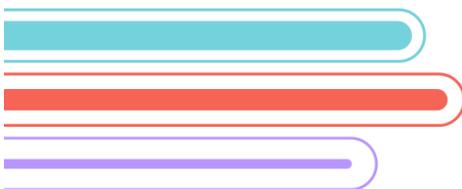
***Beth Bennett** — Executive Director, **Wisconsin Newspaper Association***

***Brandi Makuski** — Publisher, **Point/Plover Metro Wire***

***Michelle Vetterkind** — President and CEO, **Wisconsin Broadcasters Association***

***Tom Kamenick** — President and Founder, **The Wisconsin Transparency Project***

***McKenna Scherer** — Managing Editor, **Volume One***



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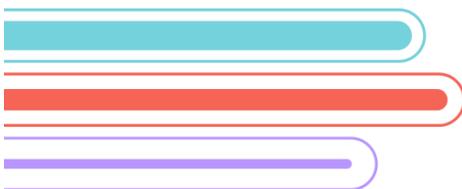


*Sage Weil — Founder and CEO, Civic Media*

*Gary Green — Executive Director, Student Press Law Center*

*Becky Kneer — Co-Editor, Menomonee News Net*

*Judith Davidoff — President and Editor, Isthmus*



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