



June 28, 2024

The Honorable Bryan Steil  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1309 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Steil:

I write in response to your letter, dated June 3, 2024, wherein you asked for a review by the Universities of Wisconsin of two matters related to Federal Work Study (FWS) and voter registration at our universities. I appreciate your concern related to the potential for perceived partisan electoral efforts at our institutions, and I welcome the opportunity to provide a response to your inquiry.

As you are aware, in a February 2024 Dear Colleague Letter, the Department of Education clarified that FWS funds “may be used for employment by a Federal, State, local, or Tribal public agency for civic engagement work that is not associated with a particular interest or group, consistent with 34 CFR § 675.22(b)(5). This work can include supporting broad-based get-out-the-vote activities, voter registration, providing voter assistance at a polling place or through a voter hotline, or serving as a poll worker.”<sup>1</sup> While we appreciated this guidance from the Department of Education, our review, conducted in consultation with the UW chancellors, indicates no such use of FWS funds by our universities during the most recent academic year, nor plans for such use in 2024-25.

Further, our review confirms no partisan electoral activities in violation of the Help America Vote Act of 2002. However, I do wish to note that, pursuant to the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and in order to remain eligible for federal student aid, institutions of higher education are required to “make a good faith effort to distribute a mail voter registration form, requested and received from the State, to each student enrolled in a degree or certificate program and physically in attendance at the institution, and to make such forms widely available to students at the institution.”<sup>2</sup> As such, it is important to confirm that each of our universities remains in compliance with this statutory requirement.

As a former member of the Board of Regents, your continued interest in and commitment to the Universities of Wisconsin is appreciated. We take seriously our stewardship of taxpayer dollars and are committed to ensuring that our universities remain in compliance with all relevant rules, laws, and regulations in this space. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jay Rothman'.

Jay Rothman  
President, Universities of Wisconsin

cc: Dr. Lynn Akey, Chancellor, UW-Parkside

<sup>1</sup> <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2024-02-26/use-federal-work-study-funds-voter-registration>

<sup>2</sup> <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2022-04-21/requirements-distribution-voter-registration-forms>