



State of Wisconsin
2025 - 2026 LEGISLATURE

LRB-5710/1
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2025 BILL

1 **AN ACT** *to repeal* 16.004 (22) and 20.855 (4) (dt); *to create* 15.105 (34), 15.105
2 (35), 16.095, 20.505 (1) (ay), 20.505 (1) (az), 20.923 (6) (ak) and 230.08 (2) (ym)
3 of the statutes; **relating to:** grants to WisconsinEye for the establishment of
4 an endowment fund, creating the Office of the Public Affairs Network to
5 administer a public affairs network in Wisconsin, and making an
6 appropriation.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

Subject to approval by the the Joint Committee on Finance, current law requires the Department of Administration to make one or more payments in the form of a grant to the WisconsinEye Public Affairs Network, Inc., not to exceed a total of \$10,000,000, for the establishment of an endowment fund. DOA may not award any such grant unless WisconsinEye raises funding for the endowment fund from nonstate sources in an amount that at least equals the amount of that grant. The grant authorization sunsets on June 30, 2026. WisconsinEye currently operates a public affairs network in Wisconsin that broadcasts live state government proceedings, news conferences, and civic events and maintains digital archives of its broadcasts.

This bill eliminates that current-law provision for one or more grants to

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WisconsinEye totaling up to \$10,000,000. Instead, the bill establishes the Office of the Public Affairs Network, which is attached to DOA, for the administration of a public affairs network in Wisconsin. The bill also creates the Public Affairs Network Board to appoint the office's director and oversee its activities. The board consists of the governor, two public members appointed by the governor, and four members of the legislature.

Under the bill, the public affairs network must satisfy all of the following requirements and prohibitions:

1. The public affairs network must provide unedited live video and audio coverage, including online, of state government proceedings. State government proceedings include floor sessions of the senate and assembly, meetings of legislative committees, meetings of executive branch agencies, supreme court and other judicial proceedings, news conferences by legislators or other state government officials, and related civic events.

2. The public affairs network must provide coverage by live stream online of all legislative proceedings that are open to the public.

3. The public affairs network must permanently maintain and provide online access to unedited digital archives of its coverage of all such state government proceedings.

4. The public affairs network may not impose restrictions, such as a requirement to register, on the public's access to any of the content.

5. The public affairs network must be operated in a manner that is strictly nonpartisan.

The bill appropriates \$2,000,000 per fiscal year to fund the office's general program operations. The bill also directs DOA and the Public Affairs Network Board to consult with the Educational Communications Board in establishing the public affairs network.

Finally, the bill requires DOA to attempt to obtain the complete digital archives of WisconsinEye and authorizes DOA to contract with WisconsinEye in order to do so and appropriates funds for the contract. If DOA obtains the digital archives, DOA must permanently maintain and provide unrestricted online public access to the complete digital archives. The bill also authorizes seven FTE positions for the public affairs network, in addition to the director, and allows DOA to waive competitive hiring procedures for former WisconsinEye employees to fill those positions.

For further information see the state fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

1 **SECTION 1.** 15.105 (34) of the statutes is created to read:

2 **15.105 (34) OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS NETWORK.** There is created an

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1 office of the public affairs network, which is attached to the department of
2 administration under s. 15.03. The office shall be under the direction and
3 supervision of a director, who shall be appointed by the public affairs network board
4 and serve at the pleasure of the board.

5 **SECTION 2.** 15.105 (35) of the statutes is created to read:

6 15.105 (35) PUBLIC AFFAIRS NETWORK BOARD. There is created a public affairs
7 network board, which is attached to the department of administration under s.
8 15.03. The board shall meet quarterly and may meet at other times on the call of
9 the chairperson or a majority of its members. The board consists of the following
10 members:

11 (a) The governor, or his or her designee.

12 (b) Two public members appointed by the governor for a 4-year term.

13 (c) One senator appointed by the president of the senate and one senator
14 appointed by the minority leader of the senate.

15 (d) One representative to the assembly appointed by the speaker of the
16 assembly and one representative to the assembly appointed by the minority leader
17 of the assembly.

18 **SECTION 3.** 16.004 (22) of the statutes, as affected by 2025 Wisconsin Act 15,
19 is repealed.

20 **SECTION 4.** 16.095 of the statutes is created to read:

21 **16.095 Office of the public affairs network. (1) DEFINITIONS.** In this
22 section:

23 (a) "Board" means the public affairs network board.

24 (b) "Director" means the director appointed under s. 15.105 (34).

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1 (c) "Office" means the office of the public affairs network.

2 (d) "State government proceedings" includes floor sessions of the senate and
3 assembly, meetings of legislative committees, meetings of executive branch
4 agencies, supreme court and other judicial proceedings, news conferences by
5 legislators or other government officials relating to legislative, judicial, or executive
6 branch official business, and civic events directly related to legislative, judicial, or
7 executive branch official business. "State government proceedings" does not
8 include campaign events, or news conferences or civic events related to campaign
9 events.

10 (2) DUTIES OF THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS NETWORK BOARD. The board shall appoint
11 the director as provided in s. 15.105 (34) and oversee the operations of the office to
12 ensure the conditions in sub. (3) are met.

13 (3) ADMINISTRATION OF THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS NETWORK. The office shall, under
14 the direction and supervision of the director, administer a public affairs network in
15 this state that satisfies all of the following:

16 (a) The public affairs network shall provide unedited live video and audio
17 coverage, including online, of state government proceedings, including floor
18 sessions of the senate and assembly, meetings of legislative committees, meetings of
19 executive branch agencies, supreme court and other judicial proceedings, news
20 conferences, and civic events.

21 (b) The public affairs network shall provide coverage by live stream online of
22 all legislative proceedings that are open to the public.

23 (c) The public affairs network shall permanently maintain and provide online

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1 public access to unedited digital archives of its coverage of state government
2 proceedings specified in pars. (a) and (b).

3 (d) The public affairs network may not impose a requirement, including a
4 requirement to register online, that restricts or burdens the public's access to any
5 content provided under pars. (a) to (c).

6 (e) The public affairs network shall be operated in a manner that is strictly
7 nonpartisan.

8 **SECTION 5.** 20.005 (3) (schedule) of the statutes: at the appropriate place,
9 insert the following amounts for the purposes indicated:

	2025-26	2026-27
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11 **20.505 Administration, department of**

12 (1) SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT

13 (az) Office of the public affairs

14 network	GPR	B	2,000,000	2,000,000
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15 **SECTION 6.** 20.505 (1) (ay) of the statutes is created to read:

16 20.505 (1) (ay) *WisconsinEye archives*. A sum sufficient to fund a contract to
17 obtain the digital archives, and purchase equipment, of the WisconsinEye Public
18 Affairs Network, Inc.

19 **SECTION 7.** 20.505 (1) (az) of the statutes is created to read:

20 20.505 (1) (az) *Office of the public affairs network*. Biennially, the amounts in
21 the schedule for the general program operations of the office of the public affairs
22 network under s. 16.095.

23 **SECTION 8.** 20.855 (4) (dt) of the statutes, as affected by 2025 Wisconsin Act
24 15, is repealed.

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SECTION 9. 20.923 (6) (ak) of the statutes is created to read:

20.923 **(6)** (ak) Administration, department of; office of the public affairs network: director.

SECTION 10. 230.08 (2) (ym) of the statutes is created to read:

230.08 **(2)** (ym) The director for the office of the public affairs network in the department of administration.

SECTION 11. Nonstatutory provisions.

(1) CONSULTATION WITH THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS BOARD. The department of administration and the public affairs network board shall consult with the educational communications board regarding best practices, based on the educational communication board's expertise and experiences developed through its duties and powers under ss. 39.11 and 39.115, in establishing and maintaining a public affairs network.

(2) WISCONSINEYE DIGITAL ARCHIVES. The department of administration shall attempt to obtain the complete digital archives of the WisconsinEye Public Affairs Network, Inc., and may contract with the WisconsinEye Public Affairs Network, Inc., or its successor, in order to obtain the archives and, if the department determines it is in the public interest to do so, to purchase broadcast and other equipment owned by the WisconsinEye Public Affairs Network, Inc. If the department obtains the digital archives, the department shall permanently maintain and provide online public access to the entire digital archives obtained by the department and may not impose any restriction, including a requirement to register, for access to any of the content.

(3) POSITION AUTHORIZATIONS.

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SECTION 11

(a) The authorized FTE positions for the department of administration are increased by 8.0 GPR positions, to be funded from the appropriation under s. 20.505 (1) (a), to provide for a director of the office of the public affairs network and 7 positions in the office of the public affairs network to produce and record video and audio coverage of events and maintain the network's digital archives.

(b) The bureau of merit recruitment and selection in the division of personnel management in the department of administration is authorized to waive competitive hiring procedures required under ch. 230 so that an employee of the WisconsinEye Public Affairs Network, Inc., may be hired into a position within the office of the public affairs network in the department of administration if the individual's work experience at the WisconsinEye Public Affairs Network, Inc., has qualified the individual to perform the duties of the position.

(END)