



State of Wisconsin  
2015 - 2016 LEGISLATURE

LRB-4592/1  
PJK:kjf

## 2015 SENATE BILL 670

February 1, 2016 – Introduced by Senators CARPENTER, C. LARSON, HARRIS DODD, VINEHOUT, WIRCH, HANSEN, LASSA and ROTH, cosponsored by Representatives BROSTOFF, STUCK, GENRICH, JOHNSON, MILROY, GOYKE, SUBECK, KOLSTE, DANOU, HINTZ, HESSELBEIN, BARNES, DOYLE, GANNON, POPE, BOWEN, E. BROOKS, RIEMER, KULP, SHANKLAND, WACHS, OHNSTAD, ZEPNICK, ROHRKASTE, SINICKI, BALLWEG, KITCHENS, CONSIDINE, ZAMARRIPA, KESSLER, SARGENT, MEYERS, YOUNG, BARCA, A. OTT, SPREITZER and JORGENSEN. Referred to Committee on Government Operations and Consumer Protection.

- 1     **AN ACT to amend** 765.16 (2m); and **to create** 765.16 (1m) (g) of the statutes;  
2     **relating to:** persons authorized to officiate at a marriage.

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### *Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau*

This bill authorizes a mej koob to officiate at a marriage in accordance with traditional Hmong wedding ceremony customs.

Under current law, a marriage is validly solemnized and contracted in this state after a marriage license has been issued and the two parties mutually declare, before an authorized officiating person and two witnesses, that they take each other as each other's spouse. The following persons are authorized officiating persons: 1) an ordained member of the clergy; 2) a licentiate of a denominational body or an appointee of a bishop serving as the regular member of the clergy of any church of the denomination to which the member of the clergy belongs; 3) the two marrying parties themselves, by mutual declaration that they take each other as each other's spouse; 4) a judge, reserve judge, or municipal judge; and 5) a circuit court commissioner. This bill adds a mej koob, in accordance with traditional Hmong wedding ceremony customs, to the list of who may officiate at a marriage. A mej koob is an individual in Hmong culture who negotiates a marriage between the families of the future bride and groom. A mej koob also conducts the wedding celebration and ensures that the traditional Hmong cultural customs and rituals are followed during the celebration.

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

