

Fair Maps & Democracy for All

NONPARTISAN REDISTRICTING

Gerrymandering is a tool used by both political parties to maximize their legislative representation despite the will of the voters. Gerrymandered districts are characterized by irregular shapes that deviate from municipal lines and pack voters of the same political party together, resulting in uncompetitive elections. That is why many states have authorized nonpartisan commissions to draw new district lines every 10 years. However, Wisconsin still leaves this task up to the state legislature, giving the majority party an opportunity to skew results of future elections to their own advantage.

There are several problems with the current partisan redistricting process:

VOTER DISENFRANCHISEMENT

Wisconsin's current district maps were ruled unconstitutional by a federal court in 2016 because they unfairly dilute the votes of over half of the state's citizens, violating the First Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. We should empower voters to participate in the democratic process by preserving our right to open and accountable elections.

UNCOMPETITIVE RACES

In competitive districts, candidates and elected officials have an obligation to respond to the needs of their constituents. In the November 2018 general election, 33 of the 99 state Assembly races featured candidates who ran unopposed. In the state Senate, only six races were decided by fewer than 10 percentage points. In order for democracy to thrive, voters must have a real choice when they go to the polls.

EXTREME PARTISANSHIP & POLARIZATION

Most Wisconsinites want members of the Legislature to work across party lines. Unfortunately, our legislative districts are drawn to be "safe" for one party or the other, favoring extreme partisanship. Nonpartisan redistricting would result in more mixed districts where moderate views prevail.

VOTER AND CANDIDATE CONFUSION

Voters and elected officials alike count on town halls, county fairs, and other local events to meet one another. When districts are carved up, constituents struggle to know whether they're talking to the right legislator. Fair maps would cut the confusion and lead to more robust dialogue between elected officials and voters.

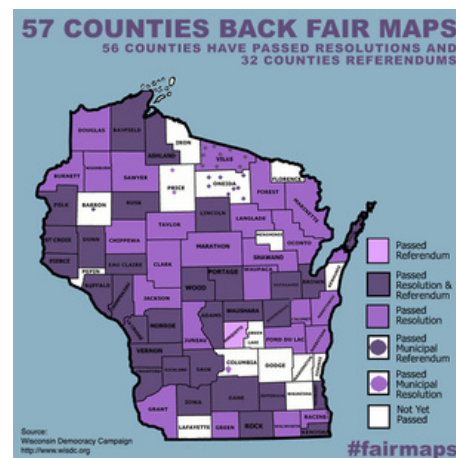
UNNECESSARY EXPENSE

Partisan political maps have resulted in expensive court battles at taxpayer expense. Taxpayer dollars should be used for public needs like roads, schools, internet infrastructure, and clean water, not to defend political battles the majority of citizens do not support.

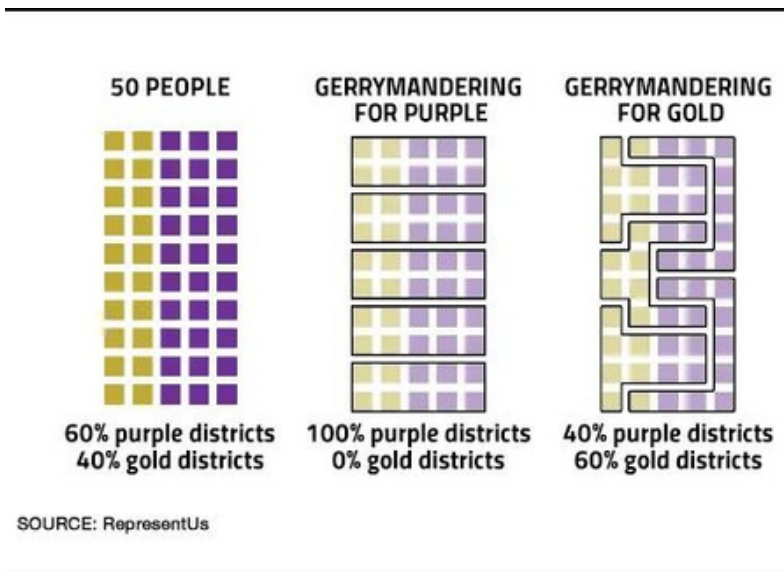
"We're at a place now in this country where voters are not picking their representatives anymore.

Representatives, through the gerrymandering process and redistricting, are picking their voters."

-Former Republican Wisconsin Congressman Reid Ribble, 2013



Wisconsin's electoral districts are so heavily gerrymandered that in 2016 a federal court deemed them unconstitutional, and in 2017, the state was ordered to redraw the maps. The decision was appealed to the Supreme Court which ruled that the state, not a federal court, must decide whether current electoral maps represent a partisan political gerrymander. In December 2023, The WI Supreme Court ruled that the current Wisconsin legislative district maps are unconstitutional based on the contiguity requirement in the Wisconsin State Constitution.



While Wisconsin's legislative maps are being redrawn in 2024, the need for a permanent solution to gerrymandering remains.

WHAT CAN THE STATE DO?

ESTABLISH A NONPARTISAN COMMISSION

Wisconsin Farmers Union is calling for legislation that would transfer redistricting responsibilities to an independent, nonpartisan commission for map-drawing to promote accountability and transparency while explicitly prohibiting the consideration of voting patterns, party information, outside lobbying interests, incumbents' residence information, or demographic details in the map-drawing process. The only exception to these restrictions would be if necessary to ensure minority participation, as required by the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, WFU supports the reintroduction of a bill that would encompass redistricting legislation in the form of a constitutional amendment. If passed, this would prevent any political party from unfairly rigging district maps in their favor again.

DON'T MAKE THIS A PARTISAN ISSUE

Although Republicans were in power for the previous redistricting and now Democrats are calling for reform, the opposite is true in Illinois. In their redistricting in 2010-2011, Democrats gerrymandered the state to their advantage and Republicans are now calling for redistricting by an independent commission. Both parties will continue to use this to their own advantage until it is given over to a nonpartisan commission, and both parties will eventually suffer unless something is changed.

