



Chris Danou's Capitol Report

Redistricting Update

A few weeks ago, I wrote about the redistricting process that has been taking place here in Madison and I wanted to provide you with an update. Since I last wrote about his topic, both houses of the legislature have approved several GOP written redistricting proposals. Senate Bill 148 is the proposal dealing with both State Senate and Assembly Districts and redrawing legislative boundaries. Senate Bill 149 is the bill dealing with Congressional District boundaries and Senate Bill 150 addresses the redistricting appeal process and dictates giving the state priority control over local municipalities ward boundaries.

Just this week, Governor Walker signed Senate Bill 150. We are still waiting to hear back from the Governor regarding Senate Bill 148 & 149 dealing with the legislative and congressional boundaries. In my view two major problems exist with Senate Bill 150. The first issue is that Wisconsin's proud tradition of local control is being usurped as the state is modifying the order of redistricting among units of government. . In any redistricting process, local ward boundaries must conform to the newly drawn state legislative districts. In the past the procedure has been for the local units of government to release their lines first. The state would then follow suit and release a map that conformed to the local redistricting lines.

Senate Bill 150 gives the state and not the local units of government priority in drawing the lines. No one is really sure why the GOP majority decided to change the normal procedure. Perhaps the reason is that the Republicans have a majority in both houses of the legislature and want to get their version of the new district boundaries passed before the Senate recall elections? Whatever the reason, the actions of the majority area slap at local control.

The other issue arising from Senate Bill 150 is a concern regarding the separation of powers and the role of the legislative and judicial branches of state government. The bill directs the Wisconsin Supreme Court to appoint a panel to hear challenges to the apportionment of congressional and/or legislative districts. Earlier this year, lawyers for Senate Republicans argued before the State Supreme Court that there should be a separation of power when is comes to the issue of open meetings. However, the recently passed legislation instructs the Wisconsin Supreme Court on where to send a case related to redistricting and how the Court should conduct its internal business.

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