



FORWARD
WISCONSIN

Fight for Fair Maps
ACTION TOOLKIT

It's time to Fight for Fair Maps!

This winter, Forward Wisconsin is back with the Fight for Fair Maps, as we continue to address the critical political issues we can all agree on, regardless of our place on the political spectrum.

Every ten years, new lines are drawn for legislative districts in Wisconsin. This process is known as redistricting, which will occur again in 2021. This session, a bill was introduced by State Representative Robyn Vining and her colleagues that would take this power away from the politicians, and place the responsibility with a non-partisan service agency called the Legislative Reference Bureau.

72% of Wisconsinites agree -- Wisconsin needs fair maps. But to make it happen, we need to reach people across Wisconsin and make it clear to legislators that we won't stop fighting for nonpartisan redistricting. With your help, we will be meeting, organizing, and talking to people across the state to make sure that every representative hears your voices.

This toolkit is designed to help you bring the #Fight4FairMaps home to your community. From strategies for talking about fair maps around the dinner table to sample letters to your legislator and social media posts, you'll find materials to help share why non-partisan redistricting is important with friends and family *and* hold your legislators accountable.

It's time to share why fair maps are important to you! Join us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with the hashtags #Fight4FairMaps and #fairmapsFRIDAYS today. You can write a post with your story or record a short video -- every voice has an impact in this fight.

We're excited to have you on the team!

Robyn and the Forward Wisconsin Team

Action Checklist

There are so many easy ways to get involved with the #Fight4FairMaps! Things may be busy, but with this toolkit, you can take action in five minutes or less. How many can you complete?

Take it to the Table with “Politics for the Holidays”

- Use our easy discussion guide and talking points to start the conversation this holiday season and into the new year about why fair maps are important to Wisconsin with your friends and family.

Take it to the Internet

- Sign up with us at ForwardWisc.com
- Like Forward Wisconsin’s social media for real-time updates (and invite your friends to like us too!) Find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/forwardwisc) at [Facebook.com/forwardwisc](https://www.facebook.com/forwardwisc) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/forward_wisc) at [Twitter.com/forward_wisc](https://twitter.com/forward_wisc)
- Post about how you are taking action and why nonpartisan redistricting is important to you! Use the #Fight4FairMaps or #fairmapsFRIDAYS to connect with other Forward Wisconsin supporters.

Take it to the Capitol

- Send your legislators a letter. Use our easy form letter at <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-your-legislators-wisconsin-needs-fair-maps> or try the template below to write a personal letter to ask your representatives to support the #Fight4FairMaps!
- Call your legislators and ask where they stand in the #Fight4FairMaps at 800-362-9472.
- Ask your legislators for a meeting in the district and attend their local office hours or listening sessions.

Take it to the Press

- Write your local paper or community newsletter about the importance of the fair maps to your community. Check out the sample letter to the editor and op-ed below -- feel free to use or customize it for your area.

“Politics for the Holidays” Dinner Table Discussion Guide

Politics can make for difficult conversation, especially during the holidays, but there is one thing we can all agree on -- that voters should pick their politicians, politicians shouldn't pick their voters. Try opening the conversation with friends and family about nonpartisan redistricting! For example:

- Voters should choose their politicians -- politicians should not get to pick their voters.
- This isn't a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. 72% of Wisconsinites support nonpartisan redistricting and fair maps.
- Gerrymandering is wrong when Democrats do it, and it's wrong when Republicans do it.
- Gerrymandered (unfair maps) rig the system and undermine the will of the people/our democratic system.
- When politicians pick their voters instead of the other way around, they are insulated from the accountability required in a democracy.
- Right now, politicians get to draw their own legislative districts. In Wisconsin, gerrymandered maps assure Republican control of the Assembly whether it Democrats or Republicans win more votes in an election year.
- We need nonpartisan redistricting reform to ensure that every district is fair and competitive and to keep our politicians accountable to voters.

Letters to Legislators

Legislators receive less contacts from constituents than you might expect! As few as ten letters, calls, or emails can have a major effect on a legislative office, and your personal letters have the most impact,

Each letter, email, or call requires individual attention from a legislator and their staff, who must log and respond to the contact. Consider organizing a letter-party, where family and friends take a few minutes to all write your legislators on the same topic. It only takes a few minutes, and it's a great way to work together to make an impact!

Ask your legislators if they support fair maps, if they will co-sponsor the fair maps bills, and/or if they will push for a public hearing for the bills in the legislature.

Sample letters for you to use or adapt are below, or draft your own to share your personal experiences. Find your legislators' contact information at [maps.legis.wisconsin.gov!](https://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov/)

Sample 1:

Dear [Legislator],

I'm writing today because I am concerned about the influence of partisan gerrymandering on our legislative redistricting process in Wisconsin.

Partisan gerrymandering is wrong when Democrats do it, and it is wrong when Republicans do it. 72% of Wisconsinites have spoken and 50 counties have passed resolutions demanding fair mapping, and legislators from both sides of the aisle are signed on as co-sponsors. It's time for the legislature to take action.

Voters should choose their politicians - politicians should not choose their voters. It is clear that Wisconsin needs nonpartisan redistricting reform before 2021. Do you support AB 303/SB 288 and fair legislative maps for all Wisconsinites?

Sincerely,

[Constituent]

[Address]

Sample 2:

Dear [Legislator],

I am writing to ask for your support for 2019 Assembly Bill 303 and 2019 Senate Bill 288, which would establish a nonpartisan redistricting system in Wisconsin.

In the 2018 election, Wisconsin Assembly Democrats received 200,000 more votes than Assembly Republicans, but Democrats make up just 36 of the 99 seats in the Assembly. Voters should get to choose their politicians; politicians should not get to choose their voters.

The people of Wisconsin overwhelmingly support nonpartisan redistricting reform, with 72% of Wisconsinites in favor of fair maps. This isn't a partisan issue -- we each have a constitutional right to fair representation, and every vote deserves equal value. Fair maps will guarantee that equality in every legislative district.

I strongly urge you to support 2019 Assembly Bill 303 and 2019 Senate Bill 288. Please sign on as a co-sponsor and help us to ensure every vote is equal in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

[Constituent]

[Address]

Sample 3:

Dear [Legislator],

I am hearing a lot about Wisconsin's gerrymandering problem, and how important it is that we pass nonpartisan redistricting in the legislature. I think it is important that voters choose their legislators, instead of legislators choosing their voters. Do you support the fair maps bill in the legislature?

Thanks,

[Constituent]

[Address]

Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds

Letters to the editor and op-eds (guest opinion columns) in your local newspaper are a great way to share your thoughts and get the word out to the community about legislative and policy issues. These columns give local community members the chance to inform the public, voice their opinions, and begin local discussions.

Letters to the editor are usually short. Most local papers limit them to between 150 and 250 words, so it is usually best to check your local paper's editorial policy. Op-eds are a little longer, often 300 to 500 words, and are an opportunity to get a little deeper into the policy and impact behind an issue.

You can also use Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds to keep your local legislators accountable. Many people do not follow the legislature closely, so these columns can be a good tool to inform the public about votes and positions your legislator holds that you oppose.

Below are tips, talking points, and samples of each format for you to use and adapt for your own letter to the editor or op-ed on the importance of fair maps!

Letter to the Editor/Op-Ed Tips

- **Make it local** -- What do fair maps mean for your community? What will your neighbors identify with?
- **Make it relevant** - Tie your column to current events in the community or statewide or values that you share with your neighbors to show why it is important to your readers.
- **Make it personal** - Share how this would affect you with personal stories or anecdotes.
- Remember to check your local newspaper or newsletter's opinion page to find the email or mailing address for where to send your letter or column.
- Don't be discouraged if it isn't printed -- follow up with the editorial board about whether changes are needed, and consider updating and resubmitting your letter as the fair maps bills continue in the legislature.

Fair Maps Talking Points

Pick a few of the talking points from our conversation guide and use them to make a strong argument in support nonpartisan redistricting and fair maps! Talking points work best when you combine them with local concerns, recent news, and/or personal stories to make them relevant to your readers.

Letter to the Editor: It's Time for Fair Legislative Maps (217 words)

To the Editor:

Under the U.S. Constitution, we each have a constitutional right to fair representation. Each of our votes deserves equal value. But as we move closer and closer to the 2020 election year, the value of our votes is at risk.

Right now, politicians get to draw their own legislative districts, allowing them to pick their voters, instead of voters picking their politicians. In Wisconsin, these “gerrymandered” maps rig the system, assuring Republican control of the State Assembly whether Democrats or Republicans win more votes in an election year.

While the outcome in Wisconsin is centered around one party, this isn’t a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. This is a democracy issue. Gerrymandering is wrong when Democrats do it, and it is wrong when Republicans do it. When politicians pick their voters instead of the other way around, they are insulated from the accountability that is supposed to come with each election.

This isn’t how it has to be. Assembly Bill 303 and Senate Bill 288 would establish a nonpartisan redistricting system and guarantee fair legislative maps for everyone in Wisconsin. Fair maps would ensure that every vote has equal value and keep our politicians accountable to us.

72% of Wisconsinites support nonpartisan redistricting and fair maps. It’s time our politicians join us.

Sincerely,
[Name]
[Address]

Op-Ed: The Value of Our Votes is at Risk (337 words)

Under the U.S. Constitution, we each have a constitutional right to fair representation. No matter where we live or which party we vote for, each of our votes deserves equal value in America. But as we move closer and closer to the 2020 election year, the value of our votes is at risk.

Gerrymandering, or the political practice of drawing legislative districts to include certain voters and exclude others, has created unfair legislative districts in Wisconsin. This means that in 2011 (when the maps were last drawn) and in 2021, politicians get to draw their own legislative districts and pick their voters, instead of voters picking their politicians.

In Wisconsin, these “gerrymandered” maps rig the system, assuring Republican control of the State Assembly whether it Democrats or Republicans win more votes in an election year. But while the outcome here is centered around one party, this isn’t a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. This is a democracy issue.

Gerrymandered maps isolate our politicians from the accountability required in a democracy. They ensure that most districts are decided by primary elections, when few voters are present, and help to protect incumbents from challenges or criticism. When politicians pick their voters instead of the other way around, they are insulated from the accountability required in a democracy.

We have a solution ready and waiting in the legislature: 2019 AB 303/2019 SB 288 would establish a nonpartisan redistricting system in Wisconsin, instead of allowing politicians to draw their own districts and pick their own voters. Fair maps will guarantee that every vote has equal value in every legislative district, and ensure that our politicians are accountable to their voters.

72% of Wisconsinites support nonpartisan redistricting and fair maps. It's past time our politicians act with the will of the people, instead of in their own interest. I'll be asking my legislators to support 2019 AB 303/2019 SB 288, and I hope you do the same. Let's make sure every vote is valued equally in Wisconsin.