

EDITORIAL: He's right. The voting is rigged

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People should demand removal of redistricting from partisan hands.

IN POLITICS, the definition of a gaffe is when one gets caught telling the truth.

Which brings us to Rep. Reid Ribble, R-Sherwood, who represents Wisconsin's 8th Congressional District. In a National Public Radio interview along with Rep. Jim Cooper, D-Tennessee, Ribble addressed a question about why nearly every incumbent congressman is re-elected over and over when polls show most Americans are so dissatisfied.

Ribble's response: "That speaks to gerrymandering of districts. I mean, you talk about the political dysfunction, if you're coming from a district that's 80 percent Republican or 80 percent Democrat, your big problem is whether you're going to be primaried or not. The very nature pushes you to the perimeter of the political spectrum, just by virtue of the people you're giving voice to. I think the American people have a misperception of elections. 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."

THAT SOUND YOU HEAR is the majority party's teeth grinding in Madison, because Ribble blurted out the truth about election-rigging following the 2010 census and its constitutionally mandated redistricting. Those in power are supposed to stick to the script and say the remapping process was entirely fair and non-partisan — even when they know it's a whopper.

Let's hasten to add it could just as easily be grinding teeth by the majority party in Springfield — in this case, Democrats — because they used their power to lock in Democrats and freeze out Republicans. Corrupting democracy is a bipartisan exercise.

The end result: Elections are meaningless, because any potential for real competition has been engineered out of the districts.

THOSE IN POWER will not voluntarily change what they consider an advantage to help them hold onto that power. Trust them only to search relentlessly for even more ways to emasculate voters. In fact, when Assembly Speaker Robin Vos interviewed with the Beloit Daily News he made it clear he would not support attempts to take the politics out of redistricting.

But there is a choice and people ought to get behind it. Senate Bill 163 and Assembly Bill 185 propose redistricting reform to clean up the corruption of the election process and return competitiveness following the 2020 census. It is modeled after the practice in Iowa, which has worked exceptionally well to distance electoral boundary-setting from partisan influence.

Noisy public pressure might — repeat, might — help some politicians find their backbone and do the right thing. We encourage readers to lean on their legislators. Government is supposed to belong to you, the citizen. Get riled and demand your right to competitive elections.