



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Assembly Democratic Freshmen Applaud Redistricting Decision

MADISON- Today, a panel of three federal judges found Wisconsin's heavily gerrymandered legislative districts to be an unconstitutional infringement on the rights of Wisconsin voters. Members of the Assembly Democratic Freshman Caucus, who authored AB 328 to create a non-partisan redistricting process in Wisconsin, made the following remarks in response:

"My Democratic freshman colleagues and I have pushed for non-partisan redistricting reform in Wisconsin from our first days in the Capitol," said Dave Considine (D-Baraboo), Co-Chair of the Freshman Caucus. "Citizens of all political beliefs support this kind of non-partisan reform. Today's verdict supports what we've known all along: voters should choose their representatives, not the other way around."

"I am very happy, but not surprised, that the courts have recognized that our current legislative maps are designed to heavily advantage one party over the other and drown out the voices of many of Wisconsin's voters," Freshman Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) said. "I am eager to see maps and districts that are fair and allow for accurate and equal representation of everyone in this great state."

Twelve Wisconsin voters sued to overturn the maps, and the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin ruled in *Whitford v. Gill* that the current legislative maps represent unconstitutional gerrymandering. These maps were drawn in 2011 behind closed doors, with virtually no input from voters or members of the public. The process utilized several private attorneys and cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

"Voters should have the right to choose their elected officials, and that choice should be a fair one, without a predetermined result," Rep. Beth Meyers (D-Bayfield) said. "Expensive attorneys hired to give an advantage to the majority party, and paid for by taxpayer funds, is a failure of our democracy."

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Wisconsin is among the most gerrymandered states in the nation, leaving voters with few choices for who represents them. In the 2014 election, 90 percent of all legislative candidates in Wisconsin won by margins greater than 10%. This is in contrast to 2010, the last election before maps were redrawn, when more than twice as many races were decided within a 10 point margin.

“This court decision is certainly a victory for voters across the State of Wisconsin,” said Rep. Amanda Stuck (D-Appleton). “For the last 5 years we have had some of the most partisan gerrymandered maps in the country, limiting voters’ ability to truly have a say in who their legislators are; this decision will return the power to the voter.”

“The Republicans’ hyper-partisan redistricting has given them an unrepresentative legislative majority,” Rep. Jonathon Brostoff (D-Milwaukee) said. “That majority enabled them to slash support for public education at every level, threaten women’s health, bust unions, disenfranchise thousands of Wisconsin voters through voter ID laws, and so much more.”

AB 328, introduced this past session by the Assembly Democratic Freshman Caucus, would take the responsibility for redistricting out of the hands of partisan politicians and assign the task of drawing new maps to the non-partisan Legislative Reference Bureau. AB 328 did not receive a hearing or a vote.

“It has always been clear that the gerrymandered districts the Republicans drew in 2011 were to benefit themselves,” Rep. Lisa Subeck (D-Madison) added. “I am glad the court agreed, and found these maps unconstitutional. To prevent this problem from happening again, we need a non-partisan redistricting process.”

The decision in *Whitford* allows both the voters who sued and the state 30 days to submit additional documents to the court stating what they believe the appropriate solution should be in the case.

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