

## Republican election bills are like monsters under the bed

### GUEST OPINION

#### By Rep. Deb Andraca

When my daughter was little, she was afraid there were monsters under her bed. Every night we would make a big show of checking all corners of her room and we gave her a spray bottle full of water. We told her this so-called “monster spray” would keep any monsters away, which made her feel better and helped her fall asleep. When elected leaders submit bill after bill designed to protect against so-called “voter fraud,” it feels like they are checking for monsters under the bed too. Even after every lawsuit was thrown out as baseless and every ballot was counted and recounted in Milwaukee and Dane counties, local leaders are making a big show of changing the process for absentee ballot forms, drop boxes, election observers, voter assistance efforts, and indefinitely confined voters — even after our election was certified and no widespread fraud was found.

It is important to learn from this incredibly difficult year to ensure all our future elections are fair and secure, so our office called every clerk’s office in our district to hear directly from the people who actually run our elections.

What these hardworking public servants told us they want most of all is to stop the meddling in our elections — by state legislators. Every bill, no matter how well-intentioned, is a burden in time, money and effort for our local municipalities and the voters they serve. Election officials want transparency and clear, consistent rules. Calling our elections fraudulent has taken a huge toll on our clerks who have worked overtime at the height of a pandemic to ensure our ballots — everyone’s ballots — were counted accurately.

When considering any election reform we need to ask: Are we fixing our elections or creating elections that are fixed? Do these bills have an impact on all voters equally or do they skew their impact towards one party or another?

Governor Evers’ budget contains provisions to automatically register voters, expand voting access, allow clerks to process ballots the day before Election Day, post a voters bill of rights at every polling location, and reimburse local officials for the cost of

funding for the most populous cities where the most people of color cast their ballots. Allowing only one dropbox per municipal clerk’s office creates problems for urban places like Milwaukee (population 594,000) and sparsely populated rural areas of our state too.

If Republican legislators honestly want to restore integrity to our elections, they can start by supporting nonpartisan redistricting. In 2011 Republicans created our current gerrymandered legislative maps in secret without hearings or debate. This year they have an opportunity to do it fairly and transparently once and for all. Ask your elected officials to co-sponsor nonpartisan redistricting legislation, or to explain why high-priced Washington, D.C., lawyers should create our maps at taxpayer expense free from public scrutiny.

Second, they can stop filing lawsuits and spreading false claims and start investing in our electoral process so that all eligible voters can safely cast a ballot. If we don’t want outside organizations funding our elections then we need to provide more funds at the local level, listen to our local clerks, and give them the tools they need to do their jobs.

I am a member of the Democratic Party but I want all voters in my district — whether they plan to vote for me or not — to participate in the democratic process. As legislators and as citizens, our biggest threat is not the loss of a single election but the breakdown of the system that has served our country so well since it was founded. This is the real monster that we face, and it should be keeping us all awake at night.

*(State Rep. Deb Andraca, D-Whitefish Bay, represents the 23rd Assembly District, covering lakeshore communities from Whitefish Bay to Grafton. She can be reached at 1-608-266-0486 or [rep.andraca@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:rep.andraca@legis.wisconsin.gov).)*



**Andraca**

special elections. These reforms help every single voter, streamline voter registration, and ensure municipalities have the funding they need to run secure and efficient elections.

In contrast, the bills being offered by Republicans make it harder to vote absentee, creating hurdles for those who are sick, disabled, or in a nursing home. They restrict additional

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