



## GUEST OPINION

# Fair maps are the will of the people

By Rep. Deb Andraca



Andraca

There seems to be only one thing people of both political parties can agree on: Our legislative process is broken. Compromise is rare, most elections have preordained winners, and incumbents feel free to ignore constituents who disagree with them. The good news is that there is bipartisan legislation that can help fix our broken system. But first we need Sen. Dwey Stroebel and Rep. Rob Swearingen, the Senate and Assembly committee chairs, to allow the public to be heard by giving the bills a hearing.

Sen. Jeff Smith and I introduced the Fair Maps Bill (SB 389/ AB 395) because we unequivocally believe that politicians should not draw political maps. Our legislation will establish an independent, nonpartisan commission to create legislative districts based on common-sense principles including compactness, following municipal boundaries, and keeping communities together whenever possible.

Ten years ago, our legislative districts were drawn in secret, by private taxpayer-funded attorneys, with one obvious objective: to keep one party in power. With the help of computer algorithms unavailable to past mapmakers, the majority party was able to draw crazy political boundaries that locked in one party's advantage for a decade.

And it worked! Wisconsin is known as a "purple" state because every statewide election is decided by extremely thin margins, yet in the Wisconsin Legislature one party has an overwhelming majority in both the Senate and the Assembly — far beyond anything that can be explained by political geography. Gerrymandering is not unique to Wisconsin. Maryland has a Democratic gerrymander that is just as skewed as Wisconsin's because, let's be honest, who wouldn't be tempted to lock in job security for a decade?

But one politician's gain is a collective loss to our state and our democracy. Since 2012, the Electoral Integrity Project at Harvard has studied the quality of elections worldwide. In its most recent study of the 2020 elections, our electoral boundaries were ranked the worst in the nation, a democratic system on par with countries like Jordan, Bahrain and the Congo. When Democrats run in Democratic "safe" seats and Republicans run in Republican "safe" seats we get candidates loyal to the party, not the people in their district. We lose competition for the moderate middle, leaving a gap where bipartisanship is usually able to grow and thrive.

Our bill says that Wisconsin's existing, nonpartisan Legislative Reference Bureau, working with a citizen-led Redistricting Advisory Commission, should create maps that are fair, compact, and as free from political favoritism as possible. We already have the staffing and infrastructure in place, but we need the Fair Maps Bill to ensure that Wisconsin maps can never be gerrymandered again, by any political party, for partisan gain.

Now that the census data is available we have a window of opportunity. The Senate Committee on Government Operations, Legal Review, and Consumer Protection, chaired by Senator Stroebel and where the Fair Maps Bill is waiting, will meet on August 25 — but without the Fair Maps Bill on the agenda. Contact your elected representatives, including Senator Stroebel and Assembly committee members Reps. Robert Brooks and Dan Knodl, and ask them to give the Fair Maps bills a public hearing. Instead of waging expensive, taxpayer-funded legal battles, let's join Iowa, Michigan, and the 11 other states that have nonpartisan redistricting commissions, fix this problem once and for all, and restore Wisconsin's tradition of open government. If there is one thing that all parties should all agree on, it is that the will of the people — not political parties — should be the law of the land.

(State Rep. Deb Andraca, D-Whitefish Bay, represents the 23rd Assembly District. She can be reached at 1-608-266-0486 or rep.andraca@legis.wisconsin.gov.)

## SOUND OFF



### School mural

I imagine the "Love is Universal" mural was created by the Webster Student Acceptance Team as an attempt to discourage bullying. I agree that bullying is not acceptable. Bullies should be held accountable for their actions by the school and their parents. However, a mural that depicts and promotes sexual lifestyles simply has no place in a middle school. Such discussions should take place in the home.

— Phil Bail,  
Cedarburg

### SOUND OFF

Responders are required to sign their names. Please provide a phone number for verification and the community where you live. Your phone number will not be published.  
Phone: 262-513-2641  
Email: soundoff@conley.net

## TODAY'S INSPIRATION



*"The test of success is not what you do when you are on top. Success is how high you bounce when you hit bottom."*

— George S. Patton

## FIRST AMENDMENT

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gives the press the right to publish news, information and opinions without government interference.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Grown-ups: Save our community; run for local office

To the editor:  
Hyperpartisan warriors have degraded our democratic institutions in Washington and Madison. We cannot allow them to ruin our local councils and boards.

Two wise Cedarburgians once reminded me that our school boards and city councils make the most fundamental decisions about how our community is shaped and funded. If we are not paying attention, and not participating, we cede those responsibilities to those who lack the maturity and humility to make these vital decisions.

As we have seen nationally, ideological extremists thrive on conflict and misinformation. They seek to intimidate and demotivate regular people from participating in governance, to clear the way for their narrow worldview. Their dysfunctional management of our affairs has been predictably ugly and petty.

I am ashamed and saddened to say that I now see the same squalid game playing out in my own children's school district. The narrow-minded are in ascendancy. Decency and common sense are being chased out.

Managing a community like Cedarburg is a delicate balancing act between competing visions, interests, and worldviews. We have been most successful when we have been able to call upon the volunteer leadership of reasonable neighbors, with open minds and tolerant hearts.

If this is you, we desperately need you to run for local office. Our community depends on it.

Garan Chivinski  
Cedarburg

### Has the damage already been done to MTSD?

To the editor:  
Dear fellow residents,  
The MTSD School Board recall may have already affected our community, whether they receive the votes for a recall election or not.

It may have polarized us all to the extent that we are no longer interested in working together. It may have polarized us so that compromise isn't sought after or worked toward. We will only resolve our differences with compromise; no school district will ever be perfect for every family.

The recall may have scared away residents that would be fantastic School Board members. I am most frightened of this effect — where are all the moderates? We need those with moderate views to sit on our board. I hope you are still out there, and willing to serve on the School Board, campaigning in an election this fall if there is one, next spring, and every spring after that.

With moderate candidates and a willingness to compromise, we can still succeed. We can continue to build and grow, resolve differences and use input to keep our school district great. That way, we all benefit.

Nancy Urbani  
Mequon

### To recall or not?

To the editor:  
I recently received a letter and recall petition papers from the group trying to recall four Mequon-Thiensville School Board members. It contained a lot of numbers regarding school test scores declining. It also states that nonresidents voted illegally for the tax levy, which the School Board did not stop.

All of these things may be true, but I guess I need some more information before I can sign such a recall effort. What report put together these statistics? Over what period of time have the scores declined? How did the School Board cause this decline? What effect did COVID-19 have on test scores? How did the School Board allow nonresidents to vote? How many voted illegally, and what impact did it have on the vote on the tax levy?

What are the effects if these people are recalled? What are the plans going forward? Who will replace these four on the school board? Who will devise a plan going forward? Who will implement the plan? What if I don't like the new plans?

Sorry, but as of now I cannot endorse this recall without more information. I hope everyone will ask these questions before signing.

Dave Maitland  
Mequon

### MTSD should be testing kids for COVID-19

To the editor:  
As many communities continue to struggle with COVID-19, and school districts try to prepare for the upcoming school year, I've come to realize it's no easy task. It's very unfortunate that an effective public health mitigation measure of masking has turned into a political debacle. However, since I have less and less faith in the right thing being done, I move my concerns to COVID testing.

It is known that testing is an important part of preventing the spread of COVID-19. However, it isn't as easy to get tested as it was last fall. I recently

had to get a few of my family members screened in a relatively timely manner, and it was nearly impossible. However, I heard that through federal funding, the Department of Health Services is offering schools a chance at free testing — zero financial burden to schools.

After learning more about this, I was certain our district was taking advantage of this program. However, although 50% of public schools in our state have signed up for this testing, we in the MTSD have not. I am very concerned about this choice. It's free, easy to administer, timely (results within 24 hours or sooner), as well as parents have the option to opt out. To me it's a no-brainer.

The benefits to testing are numerous. Catching positive cases early and preventing transmission, since many are asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic, helps to keep our children in school where they belong. The convenience of testing children without having families set up their own appointments, and obtaining results quickly, will help to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This is one of the greatest supports the MTSD could give to staff, families, and the community. I hope our district rethinks their decision and opts into the DHS's School Testing Program.

Kathlyn Albert,  
DNP, RN, FNP-BC, CNM  
Mequon

### Area doctors urge vaccination, precautions against COVID-19

To the editor:  
Dear Ozaukee County families:  
Our fight against COVID is not over and we all need to work together to get the pandemic under control. Parents, please vaccinate your children against COVID if they are eligible and please send your children to school in a mask this fall regardless of their vaccination status. COVID cases and hospitalizations are increasing for all ages, including among the pediatric population.

Numerous medical and public organizations are encouraging vaccines and masks, including but not limited to:

■ The Washington Ozaukee Public Health Department promotes vaccination and consistent and correct use of masks for all K through 12 school-age children.

■ The CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.

■ The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends in-person learning and urges all who are eligible to be vaccinated to protect against COVID-19. In addition to vaccinations, the AAP recommends that everyone older than age 2 years old wear masks in school, regardless of vaccination status.

■ The Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommends that schools require universal masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.

There is overwhelming evidence that masks do work to limit the spread of infectious diseases, including COVID. It is also clear that the delta variant is more contagious than last year's strain and there are potentially other variants on the horizon. With any degree of uncertainty about this virus, why wouldn't we err on the side of caution and take every possible safety measure for our children?

Masks are recommended to protect the people wearing them as well as prevent the disease from being spread to others. If your child cannot wear a mask for medical reasons, we understand. Please try to find other ways to protect your child in addition to vaccination.

Parents, you have trusted many of us with the care of your children. Please trust us now with these recommendations.

Dr. Kate Burrows, D.O.  
Dr. Christina Engelbert, M.D.  
Dr. Carol Estill, M.D.  
Dr. Melissa Grube, M.D.  
Dr. Dan Hagerman, M.D.  
Dr. Dave Meuler, M.D.  
Dr. Boyd Miller, M.D.  
Dr. Maren Miller, M.D.  
Dr. Julie Mossberg, M.D.  
Dr. Shannon Reinbold, M.D.  
Dr. Cindy Running, M.D.  
Dr. Katherine Kormanik, M.D.  
Dr. Ellen Shen, D.O.

### MTSD and COVID-19: Freedom comes with responsibilities

To the editor:  
To the MTSD School Board:  
I cannot overstate how grateful I was for the responsible mitigation efforts you employed in our classrooms last school year. I know you were badgered regularly by a small yet loud group of dissenters, but your strong commitment to your duties and to keeping our children — and ultimately our entire community — safe was appreciated more than I can say. I know many of my fellow community members felt the same way.

That's why I'm shocked and angered by MTSD's opening plan this year. The lack of masking requirements, the lack of safe distancing,

and complete disregard of American Academy of Pediatrics, Centers for Disease Control, and Department of Health Services recommendations is exceedingly reckless, at a time when the number of children being hospitalized is quickly climbing, when doctors are telling us that the delta variant is even more dangerous than the original COVID strain (and more than twice as contagious), and when the tally of quarantined students has already reached the hundreds in schools that have adopted lax mitigations like the ones you propose.

To the parents who claim that more stringent mitigation efforts are an assault on your freedoms: You clearly don't understand what freedom is. Freedom comes with duties and consequences. You (unfortunately) have the freedom to risk your own children's health and well-being. But you don't have the freedom to risk the health of anyone else's children. (Remember, the CDC still asserts that masks protect others more than they protect the wearer.) You have the freedom to make other school arrangements for your children if you don't choose to comply with their rules. But contrary to the familiar falsehood you spread often and loudly, our Constitution actually does allow for regulations that protect the common good. "Freedom" doesn't mean "anarchy."

Gene Kolyarsky  
Mequon

### Legislators need to work for fair redistricting

To the editor:  
The 2020 U.S. Census data are finally released. These updated population counts impact public funding distributions and also the redrawing of voting district maps. Even members of the majority party in our state Legislature don't deny that the current voting maps were drawn to favor one political party. They may try to justify, but they don't deny. Wisconsin voters deserve nonpartisan voting district maps. We know that maps can be drawn without partisan bias. Iowa has been doing it for 40 years. Instead of secrecy about the process, Wisconsin legislators should be transparent about the data entered into the computer models that generate their new maps.

Instead of inserting bias by using political voter data, legislators should leave this partisan information out of the process. Instead of taxpayer-funded lawsuits to defend partisan voting maps, legislators should accept upfront that Wisconsin voters value fairness. The right to a vote that counts is essential to our American experiment in self-government.

Passionate debate is also very American, but can't we at least agree that we don't want a one-party state? State legislators can end gerrymandering now: Be transparent and fair about the process this time around, then pass legislation to end partisan gerrymandering in the future.

Louise Mollinger  
Port Washington

### Utopian dream meets real world

To the editor:  
Demand-side economics is the utopian dream of Democrats/progressives, as opposed to supply-side economics that is based on capitalism.

A common example of demand economics: If a man is paid a salary to dig a hole and cover it up, his consumption, made possible by his pay, would create economic activity to benefit all. Democrats have taken this one step further: Why wear out a shovel? Just drop cash into your bank account.

Demand economics has two sides: COVID cash and other government largess being handed out is keeping people out of the job market. Why grab a shovel when you have no financial need? On the other hand, we have all this free money being handed out. It must go somewhere. People who don't need the handout are bidding up the financial and real estate markets beyond the reach for the average person.

The dollars that go to the masses struggling to survive are spent in an economy rife with labor and material shortages. We have created demand but no incentive to find employment to fill that demand. That is a recipe for scarce goods and services at inflated prices. In the defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, workers quipped, "they pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work." In the good ol' USA we don't even have to pretend to work.

Dennis Gasper  
Plymouth

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