



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Pick Your Legislators; Don't Let Them Pick You *By State Rep. Don Vruwink*

When I was a history teacher, I asked my students to examine important moments from our nation's past. My students would create simulations to put themselves in the shoes of important decision-makers.

While working to achieve their objectives, my students inevitably came to the same conclusion: they had to compromise. While no one got everything they wanted, students worked together to reach solutions. The Wisconsin State Legislature could benefit from this exercise.

A decision from the Supreme Court is coming soon in the *Gill v. Whitford* case. The court will determine whether Wisconsin's legislative lines are constitutional. Last year a federal three-judge panel ruled that the maps drawn in 2011 used illegal partisan measurements to ensure the map maximized Republican advantages in Assembly seats.

The Republican majority took advantage of its duty to draw legislative maps, but let me be clear: both parties have done this for their own benefit across the country. Politicians, both Republican and Democrats, have abused this process to solidify their power.

I ran for State Assembly in 2016 because I wanted to serve the people of the 43rd Assembly District – Whitewater, Milton, Edgerton, Oregon, Footville, and townships in between. I have friends who are Democrats, friends who are Republicans, non-partisan, and friends across the political spectrum. As I knocked on doors during the campaign, the one thing I heard over and over was “No one works together anymore.”

I carried that message with me to the state Capitol. I make it a point to never belittle those across the aisle. In fact, I enjoy working with many members of the majority party. While we don't always vote the same way, I know we can disagree without being disagreeable.

This brings me back to redistricting. I am fortunate that my district is evenly split along party lines. I represent people of all political parties and that makes me a better legislator. However, due to the gerrymandered maps, most districts in Wisconsin tilt in one direction or the other. If there is a primary in a district with 80 percent Republican voters, it makes sense that the most partisan candidate will win. This holds true in Democratic districts too.

I authored Assembly Bill 44 to fix the redistricting mess in Wisconsin. The bill takes politicians out of the equation when drawing legislative districts, delegating that task to the non-partisan Legislative Reference Bureau. The maps would reflect demographic changes instead of party affiliation.

No matter what the Supreme Court decides, the Legislature has a responsibility to repair redistricting. Passing AB 44 would strengthen democracy, encourage compromise, and move us back to the middle.

Rep. Don Vruwink represents the 43rd Assembly District, which includes parts of Rock, Walworth, Jefferson and Dane counties. He can be reached at Rep.Vruwink@legis.wi.gov and at 608-266-3790. The mailing address is P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708.

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