



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
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46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
August 31, 2015

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THE LEGISLATURE SHOULD WORK FOR YOU, NOT FOR ITSELF
Legislators Should Promote Good Government, Not Self-Serving Government Overhaul

By Rep. Gary Hebl

We Wisconsinites expect our milk to be cold, our cheese curds to be squeaky, and our Packers to have a winning season. Here in Wisconsin, we also expect our government to work for the PEOPLE, not to work for itself. As your state representative, I take my responsibility to remain open and available to you very seriously. Voters bestow their trust in their elected legislators, and it's critically important that the legislature remains accountable and available to public scrutiny.

I was disappointed and dismayed recently to find myself on the losing end of a vote on legislation that would protect politicians from criminal corruption probes in Wisconsin known as "John Doe" proceedings. John Doe proceedings are meant to weed out corruption. Assembly Bill 68 prohibits the use of John Doe probes against elected officials, making political corruption harder to investigate and prosecute.

AB 68 is a pro-corruption bill. I joined my Democratic committee colleagues in opposing it. Unfortunately, members of the majority party joined together to pass the legislation along party lines.

I will steadfastly oppose legislation that jeopardizes Wisconsin's tradition of good government. Gov. Scott Walker and legislative Republicans have been hinting at overhauling the nonpartisan Government Accountability Board, returning the state's elections oversight board to a partisan-appointed entity, as has been suggested by legislative leaders. I believe this move would serve only to inject political leanings into what should be an unbiased, nonpolitical watchdog.

Now, if our state elections board wasn't working, I'd understand the need for reform. For example, the current non-partisan makeup of the GAB came about due to what had been constant conflict and gridlock of the previous state elections board's partisan appointees.

Our state's well-established and well-respected Legislative Audit Bureau recently completed a full-scale, thorough inspection of the GAB's records and found that the agency is squeaky clean. In fact, the audit recommended leaving the GAB as is. Why would we want to return to the 'bad old days' of a politically-driven elections board? At this point, given the GAB's unimpeachable record, it's clear that any attempt to change the structure at the agency is politically motivated. I will oppose any efforts to inject politics into our election watchdog.

Good government requires accountability. That's why I also support reforming Wisconsin's broken redistricting process. Every ten years after the census, the legislature is required to redraw legislative and congressional districts to respond to shifts in population.

Our current system leaves the redistricting process up to partisan politicians. The result? Gerrymandered districts that are chopped up and curled around to create a political advantage for the current majority. Consider this: in the 2012 elections, Democratic Assembly candidates collectively received 200,000 more votes statewide than Republican candidates. Yet Republicans won 60 of 99 Assembly seats. There are less competitive races because partisan politicians use redistricting as a tool to strategically stack the deck in their favor. With less competitive races, some legislators who are voted into office are, oftentimes, not responsive to their constituents. That means less accountability.

And it's not just something Republicans do. A quick look to the south shows that Democrats in Illinois are just as guilty of gerrymandering as Republicans in Wisconsin. The only true solution is to adopt a redistricting process that takes the responsibility out of the hands of politicians, instead leaving the task to a nonpartisan entity. I am a co-sponsor of legislation that would require the nonpartisan Legislative Reference Bureau to draw the political maps. If we have more competitive races, representatives would be forced to be more accountable to their constituents. After all, voters should choose their legislators – not the other way around.

We continue to see efforts by the current majority to do everything in their power to maintain their majority. It creates the perception that their main goal is to stay in power, not to lead and do what's right for Wisconsin. The legislature should not be focusing its time on protecting politicians, politicizing our elections oversight board, and stacking the political deck. We need to get back to good government that works for the people, not politicians.

Rep. Gary Hebl represents the 46th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Sun Prairie and Stoughton, the village of Cottage Grove, and the townships of Cottage Grove, Dunkirk, Pleasant Springs, and Sun Prairie.

Contact Rep. Hebl with any questions or concerns you may have at (608) 266-7678 or via email at Rep.Hebl@legis.wi.gov.

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