



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
GARY HEBL
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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DESPITE LOOMING CONCERNS, AJR 1 PASSES COMMITTEE ON PARTY-LINE VOTE
Hebl: Politics Should Stay Out of our State Constitution

(MADISON) – Rep. Gary Hebl (D-Sun Prairie) today voted against AJR 1, an amendment to the Wisconsin State Constitution that establishes the Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court be elected by the Court. The proposal passed the Assembly Judiciary Committee on a party-line vote.

Hebl said that while he generally supports elections at any level of government, it was clear to him that this amendment wasn't offered in the name of good governance, but rather as a personal vendetta against the current sitting Chief Justice, Shirley Abrahamson.

“This constitutional amendment was introduced to target one woman – Shirley Abrahamson,” Hebl said. “To think that we would amend our state constitution in order to punish a single person is as extreme an example of abuse of power as I can imagine. The Supreme Court has operated under a seniority-based system for naming the Chief Justice since 1889. The current majority is willing to dismiss a 126-year-old constitutional provision in order to persecute one woman.”

Along with fellow committee members Rep. Dana Wachs (D-Eau Claire) and Rep. Evan Goyke (D-Milwaukee), Hebl introduced an amendment to AJR 1 that would delay the effective date of the constitutional change until after the current Chief Justice's term is complete. The amendment to AJR 1 was defeated on a party-line vote.

“The amendment we offered gave the majority party the opportunity to make it clear that this constitutional change isn't politically motivated,” Hebl said. “Unfortunately, instead of working to find a middle ground that all committee members would support, the majority party opted to inject politics into our State Constitution.”

Hebl also questioned the rushed manner in which the constitutional amendment was brought before the committee. Last Thursday's public hearing for AJR 1 was noticed on Tuesday of the same week, giving little time for citizens across Wisconsin to make plans to attend the hearing and offer their thoughts. Yesterday, the Senate Judiciary committee noticed its public hearing and executive session, scheduled for today.

“This is an amendment to our State Constitution,” Hebl said. “The people of Wisconsin deserve a full chance to weigh in on changes to our state's highest legal authority. Wisconsinites have been denied that opportunity.”

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