



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
GARY HEBL
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Good Government is Open and Transparent

By Rep. Gary Hebl

Last week was National Sunshine Week, an awareness campaign that takes place each year focusing on the need for open and honest government. Sunshine Week highlights the importance of a transparent and accountable government at every level, including local town boards, city councils, state legislatures, and all the way up to the United State Congress.

In my legislative office, I proudly display portraits of Wisconsin's Robert La Follette and William Proxmire. They were politicians that lauded open government, not secret votes and backroom deals. That is what the people of Wisconsin want: a Legislature that promotes transparency, not one that feels the need to cover its tracks.

The Legislature should adhere to the notion that Wisconsin's government and its actions should be open to the public. Currently, the Legislature is exempted from the state's Open Meetings law. This is wrong, and that is why I am co-sponsoring legislation from Rep. Cory Mason that would require the Legislature to hold partisan caucuses out in the open. We must allow transparency at each and every opportunity if we want to be able to hold elected officials accountable.

Accountability starts with being able to vote out your legislator if they no longer represent your values. However, district lines have been drawn to prevent competitive races and keep Republicans in the majority. When the district lines were drawn last time around, the Republican majority drew them in secret without taking public input into consideration. In fact, they even signed legal agreements that prevented them from talking about the maps while they were being drawn up. This is not the open and accountable government we expect. It was a shameful process, and one that I hope will never be repeated.

This session I have signed on to a proposal by Sen. Dave Hansen and Rep. Don Vruwink that would take the responsibility of redistricting out of the hands of partisan Legislators and instead create an independent commission that would draw political lines using a nonpartisan approach. The move to an independent commission would create a sense of objectivity in the redistricting process. It would also ensure that Wisconsin voters are provided a more representative form of government.

A good government cannot function properly unless that government provides its citizens with the opportunity to be involved and aware of its actions. Wisconsin's government can be restored to the days of transparency and accountability. It will involve political leaders acknowledging that we must return power to the people of Wisconsin. I plan to continue to push for a government that would make Robert La Follette and William Proxmire proud.

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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