



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
GARY HEBL
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Republicans Fail in Push to Deprive Citizens of a Voice in the Capitol

In December 2017, Senator Franke Lassee (R-De Pere) and Representative Keith Ripp (R-Lodi) resigned their elected offices to take jobs in Governor Walker's administration. Since then, the people of the 1st Senate District and the 42nd Assembly District have had no representation in the Capitol. Under normal circumstances, the Governor would have called for a special election soon after, like he did after the death of State Representative Bob Gannon in October 2017. Just over two months after Gannon's death, an election was held and Rick Gundrum was chosen to replace him and represent the Washington County-based district.

Governor Walker had no plans to call new special elections, satisfied with depriving some 200,000 Wisconsin citizens of representation in the Assembly and Senate. Unfortunately for him and fortunately for the democratic process, three different courts smacked down his plans. It seems that Governor Walker was hesitant to call new elections after Democrat Patty Schachtner flipped a Senate seat long held by Republicans.

Since 2011, we have seen Republicans do whatever it takes to preserve their majority, from extreme partisan gerrymandering of district lines, to curtailing early voting hours, to burdensome Voter ID laws. The will of the people doesn't matter to them. Free and fair elections do not matter to them. An open and accountable government does not matter to them. All that matters is the accumulation of political power.

When Republicans have the political power, they will do whatever they want, regardless of longstanding norms. Late on the most recent session day, a noncontroversial jobs bill was about to pass when at the last minute, an amendment – offered by a Representative who wasn't even present – added in language that would allow a mining company to fill and destroy a rare hardwood wetland in western Wisconsin. While a similar bill had previously passed the Assembly on a party line vote, it stalled in the Senate.

Instead of taking the loss on the issue, Republican Assembly leaders slipped in this amendment and called a vote on it without anyone being able to read what the language of the amendment actually was. Attaching a wildly unrelated environmental rollback to a jobs bill they knew would pass is the kind of skullduggery that has become all too commonplace in the modern Republican Party.

It does not appear that the Senate will now take up the jobs bill with the attached wetlands destruction amendment. A noncontroversial bill that might help Wisconsin residents get work is now dead because Assembly Republicans were trying to bow to corporate interests.

It is clear that having unchecked power for almost a decade has gone to Republicans' heads. We need leaders in Madison who are committed to having a fair and open process and who ultimately feel accountable to voters. Trying to rush through a bill with the specific goal of preventing the people of Senate District 1 and Assembly District 42 from having elected representation just to preserve

power raises questions about Republicans' commitment to open and accountable government. It is an undemocratic move that has luckily been averted thanks to the courts, but this kind of nefarious behavior needs to be recognized and pushed back against in the strongest terms.

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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