

Why Wisconsin Needs Fair Maps:

A Primer on Gerrymandering and Redistricting For the Wisconsin Counties Association Annual Meeting

1. What is redistricting?

After the U.S. Census is completed at the start of each decade, the legislature in Wisconsin has the responsibility to redraw the political district maps so that there are roughly equal numbers of people in each district to ensure equal representation.

2. What is partisan gerrymandering?

Partisan gerrymandering is the rigging of political maps to serve a partisan purpose: to solidify the power of the political party that is in the majority. They do this by consciously and [cleverly](#) drawing district maps so that their voters will dominate more districts, thus giving them more seats.

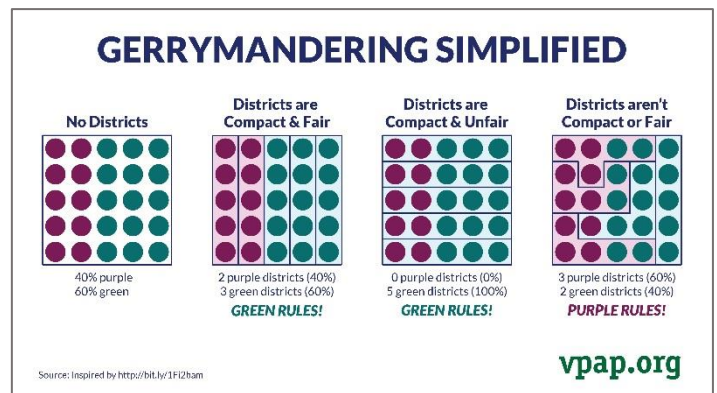
3. Is this a problem in Wisconsin?

Over the years, parties in Wisconsin have tried to draw maps that increase their representation. So this is a bipartisan problem that requires a nonpartisan solution.

The latest and most egregious example of gerrymandering in Wisconsin was the 2011 redrawing by the Republican leadership. A panel of federal judges ruled it unconstitutional after the plaintiffs demonstrated that it was one of the worst examples of gerrymandering in recent American history. With sophisticated computer modeling based on past voting patterns and other demographic data, the leadership, in secret, prepared several different maps by moving some lines here and some lines there, and each successive map predicted an increase in the GOP's seats. The final map chosen was one that predicted one of the largest increases. It also tore apart already existing political boundaries and communities of interest. For example, 58 counties were split among legislative and Congressional districts in the 2011 process—the most in Wisconsin history. Wisconsin's [redistricting case](#) is now on appeal at the U.S. Supreme Court.

4. Is there a better way?

The plaintiffs in this case devised an objective yardstick for measuring gerrymandering called "[the efficiency gap](#)." And actually, Iowa solved the problem of partisan map rigging more than 35 years ago. Rather than have the dominant party in the legislature come up with the maps, Iowa has nonpartisan career civil servants draw the maps, with specific criteria prohibiting them from including any demographic data related to voting and requiring them to keep political maps as compact as possible and to hold public hearings across the state about the new maps. Ultimately, the legislator still has the authority to approve maps, so we can make this change without a



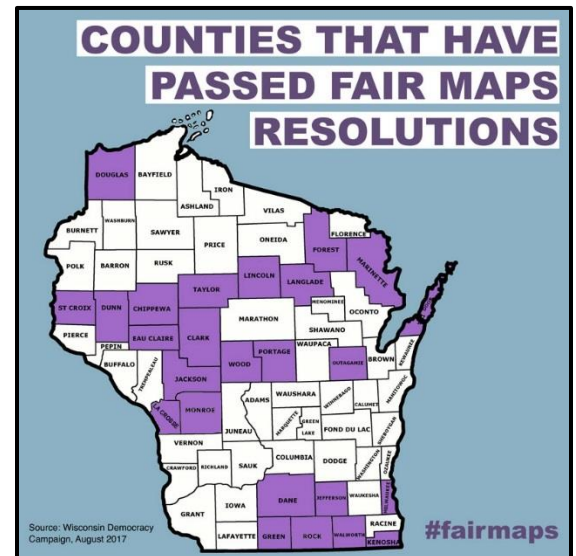
constitutional amendment. The so-called [Iowa Model](#) is supported by good government groups like the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin. And legislation has been introduced in Madison for Wisconsin to adopt the Iowa Model. It's been introduced this session by Sen. Dave Hansen and Rep. Don Vruwink ([Senate Bill 13/ Assembly Bill 44](#)).

5. What are Wisconsin counties doing about this?

Already, [30](#) Wisconsin County Boards have passed resolutions calling on the State of Wisconsin to adopt a process of nonpartisan redistricting along the lines of the Iowa Model. There is a lot of momentum on this issue: 22 County Boards came on board in just the first 9 months of 2017.

6. What is going on with this issue at the annual meeting of the Wisconsin Counties Association?

At the annual conference of the Wisconsin Counties Association, Sept. 24-26 in Wisconsin Dells, there will be a vote on a resolution to have the Wisconsin Counties Association endorse nonpartisan redistricting for Wisconsin. Each county will be represented by one member of their county board, and it is those representatives who will get to vote on the resolution.



7. Why is this so important?

It's about fair play. It's about being above board and transparent. It's about democracy, with everyone having an equal voice and a meaningful vote. It's about lessening the partisanship that is crippling our government and poisoning our political climate. It's about having real political competition instead of having so many "safe" seats that elected officials don't have to listen to some voters in their district or even compete for their votes. Voters should choose who represents them; representatives shouldn't choose their voters.

8. Who do I call for more information about this?

Hans Breitenmoser, a county board member in Lincoln County, has helped spearhead this movement in Wisconsin for fair maps and nonpartisan redistricting. He can be reached at 715.218.1398.

“This isn’t a one party sin. It happens on both sides, and that’s why we introduced [in 2013] our bipartisan bill to change how we redistrict in Wisconsin.”

Former State Senator Dale Schultz (R-Richland Center). He and fellow retired State Senator Tim Cullen (D-Janesville) tour the state educating the public on the need for fair and impartial legislative redistricting reform.