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Contact: Meghan Sovey
Meghan.Sovey@legis.wi.gov
608-266-8546

Sen. Smith Announces Bipartisan Ranked Choice Voting Legislation

MADISON – As citizens across the nation grapple with a political system that seems more broken than ever, Sen. Jeff Smith (D – Brunswick) is proposing a breakthrough bipartisan solution. Today Sen. Smith joined several lawmakers in circulating legislation for co-sponsorship to implement “Final Five” voting in Wisconsin. “Final Five” voting would change the way Wisconsinites vote in federal elections by implementing a ranked-choice voting process.

Sen. Smith is a lead author of this bill alongside his colleagues Sen. Dale Kooyenga (R – Brookfield), Rep. Kurtz (R – Waukegan) and Rep. Reimer (D – Milwaukee). Sen. Smith shared the following statement in response to the bill announcement:

“Politics have become increasingly more polarized, which makes it hard for our congressional leaders to get anything done. Citizens are tired of this broken political system. “Final Five” voting will update our electoral system and help fix the country’s political gridlock.

“Wisconsinites have a lot more in common than what divides us. Unfortunately, we’re stuck with a broken system that discourages collaboration and oftentimes rewards the candidates who are most divisive. We need to reform this system so that our state’s leaders prioritize our shared values as Wisconsinites over Party allegiance.”

This legislation would change only how congressional representatives are elected during primary and general elections. During a primary election, all candidates would run on a single ballot, regardless of Party affiliation. Voters would select their favorite candidate; once the votes are tallied, the top five finishers advance to the general election.

During a general election, voters would pick their favorite candidate and could pick their second, third, fourth and last place candidate, if they wanted. If one candidate gets more than 50% of the vote, that candidate would win. If no one has a majority, the last-place candidate would be eliminated and anyone who voted for that candidate can have their second choice counted instead. The votes are counted again, and this run-off process would continue until one candidate gets over 50%.

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The 31st Senate District includes all of Buffalo and Pepin counties and portions of Trempealeau, Pierce, Dunn, Eau Claire and Jackson counties and very small portions of Chippewa and St. Croix counties.