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Wisconsin Republicans Plan to Subvert Democracy Once Again

MADISON – In the aftermath of a ruling requiring Governor Walker to promptly call special elections in two legislative districts that have been vacant since last December, legislative Republicans plan to subvert a court order by calling an extraordinary session on special elections. Their plan is to give Governor Walker even wider latitude in refusing to call special elections, denying thousands of Wisconsinites legislative representation. Last week, Judge Josann Reynolds called Governor Walker and Attorney General Brad Schimel’s interpretation of “the most basic constitutional guarantees” and a “simply worded statute” regarding special elections “absurd,” and ruled that failing to hold the special elections infringed on the voting rights of people living in the two districts vacated.

“Why are Republican leaders so afraid of Wisconsin voters?” asked Rep. Chris Taylor (D-Madison). “If the Governor had done his job, these empty legislative seats could have been filled right now during the spring elections. But Republicans are so intimidated at facing the electorate that they are willing to circumvent a judge’s ruling and leave over 200,000 Wisconsinites unrepresented for over a year. On top of Republican lawmakers rigging the system with partisan gerrymandering and an inundation of secret corporate cash in our elections, they are now just outright refusing to call elections. They will break any rule to keep power. Wisconsin voters won’t fall for this latest scheme to further circumvent democracy.”

In addition to denying Wisconsinites adequate representation, Governor Walker and legislative Republicans have for months refused to act on a Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) request for position authority for additional staff positions needed to focus on securing our elections against cyber-attacks. Despite repeated calls from democratic members, the Joint Committee on Finance has been sitting on the WEC request since December without acting. This request comes after the WEC saw a staff reduction of 28% over the last two budgets and Governor Walker vetoed six positions in the most recent budget.

“Despite confirmed threats to Wisconsin’s voter registration system and other state agencies, the refusal to adequately staff the WEC is mind-boggling,” said Rep. Taylor. “At this point, the only explanation is that Wisconsin Republicans see no problem leaving our elections vulnerable to interference.”