



October 27, 2021

What's Next for Fair Maps in Wisconsin?

By Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point)

The process to draw Wisconsin's electoral district maps for the next decade is underway, and there is a lot at stake – most importantly, fair elections. Let's begin with the basics. Redistricting is the process by which new congressional and state legislative district lines are drawn after the U.S. census is conducted every ten years. Gerrymandering, conversely, is the manipulation of these electoral district lines to favor one political party over another.

"One person, one vote" is a fundamental principle of our democracy, yet the gerrymandered maps established by Republican politicians in 2011 entrenched their party's control of our State Legislature, diluting voters' power while keeping our government from being truly deliberative and representative of the people. This not only disenfranchises voters in heavily gerrymandered districts, but it also weakens our elected officials' accountability and the integrity of our legislative bodies. Competitive districts, however, yield more choices for voters, greater participation in our democracy, and more elected leaders who truly listen to everyone.

That's why most Wisconsin counties have passed resolutions or referenda supporting nonpartisan redistricting in our state, meaning a nonpartisan commission would draw the maps, not politicians. I'm proud to have cosponsored nonpartisan redistricting reform legislation every session since I was first elected because everyone deserves the confidence of fair maps, representation, and elections. Voters should choose their representatives – not the other way around.

Recently, Republican legislators introduced their proposed maps, which have already received an F for partisan fairness from the nonpartisan Princeton Gerrymandering Project. To contextualize, under these maps, most of Plover would be in the 8th Congressional District, based in the Fox Valley, and Stevens Point would be in the 7th Congressional District, extending from Stevens Point to the Northwoods. Splitting Portage County into two districts speaks volumes. Mark Gaber, the senior director of redistricting at the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center, told WPR recently, "Stevens Point is sort of being used as a football in the last two cycles to advantage whichever districts Republicans at the time think is going to help them the most." That is the definition of gerrymandering.

The Legislature will likely vote on the GOP maps by mid-November, but first, you have an opportunity to weigh in. I strongly encourage everyone to make their voices heard by contacting their legislators to share their thoughts.

This is a pivotal moment, as the maps that are put in place will determine how competitive our districts are and therefore how responsive and effective your state government is for the next decade. I remain committed to fighting for fair maps so every voter's voice is heard at the ballot box – independent, Democratic, Republican, Green, libertarian, *everyone*.

Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) represents Portage County in the Wisconsin State Assembly.