



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN
EDUCATION FUND

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July 22, 2011

Governor Scott Walker
115E State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Walker:

As a nonpartisan citizen organization with a 91-year history of working for honest government, the League of Women Voters urges you to reject the redistricting proposals that have been hastily passed by the state legislature.

In the past 18 months, as in every redistricting cycle, the League in Wisconsin has monitored the redistricting process, testified before local redistricting bodies and the legislature, supported reform legislation and sponsored numerous public forums around the state. There are League members serving on county redistricting committees, and two League members recently filed a petition in Brown County Circuit Court with a plan for that county's supervisory districts. Our long-held position in favor of nonpartisan redistricting has been attacked by both major political parties at different times over the decades. Public opinion, however, tends to be on our side.

The strength of our form of government stems from the people believing that their elected representatives have the public's interest at heart, not personal interests. The proposals from the legislature defy that principle.

The process and timing of the redistricting bills show no respect for the local government officials and citizens who have been working for months to develop local district plans. Traditionally, and by law, they are allowed to develop local maps before the state legislature weighs in. The current proposals would convert this grassroots process into a top-down mandate from the state. They change the rules midstream, laying waste to the significant local tax dollars and citizen volunteer hours that have already been invested. These bills are an affront to the people who know their communities best.

The once-a-decade redistricting process should not be rushed for partisan gain. Properly noticed public hearings around the state, open meetings and full transparency are essential so that citizens can participate and have faith in the outcome. The proposals should be considered by the appropriate committees in both houses of the legislature, with an executive session and committee vote in each house. Local governments have been modeling an open redistricting process for months, and the state should do no less.

Nonpartisan citizen groups working on redistricting did not expect the legislature to release maps three months early. These groups should have time to complete their own proposals and have them evaluated as part of the process. Citizens should have time to investigate the possibility of a Latino senate district, which was brought up by Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa in the only public hearing that was held for SB 148, SB 149 and SB 150.

Wisconsin's elections over the past 15 years have shown our state to be evenly divided politically. Indeed, most Wisconsinites are independent voters. Any redistricting map should reflect the *tenor* of the state, not the *tenure* of the party currently in power when redistricting is done. Partisan maps will only increase the polarization of our state government.

We urge you to rise above the fray, reject these maps, and call upon the legislature to take the time to follow an open and transparent process. By providing ample opportunity for input from local officials and the participation of citizens, you will help to restore public faith and trust in our state government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melanie G. Ramey".

Melanie G. Ramey
President