

Fair Elections Project: Whitford plaintiffs in historic map-rigging case rally in advance of U.S. Supreme Court oral argument

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Contact: Mary McCarthy
414-412-6099

MILWAUKEE—A send-off rally with the citizen plaintiffs in Gill v Whitford was held today, Sunday, October 1, at Plymouth Church in Milwaukee, in advance of the oral argument scheduled in their case at the U.S. Supreme Court this Tuesday. The federal lawsuit resulted in a trial verdict last year that overturned Wisconsin's legislative district maps for being rigged and too partisan and denying some Wisconsin citizens their constitutional rights. The state is appealing that ruling in order to protect legislative gains made by the majority party in Wisconsin despite elections in which they won fewer votes.

"We are looking forward to the case being argued Tuesday at the nation's highest court," said Mary Lynne Donohue, one of the plaintiffs. "We want to see fair maps and an honest political system, and if our win is upheld, we will see positive change across the country."

"This case came from regular citizens banding together and deciding to take change into our own hands," said Sachin Chheda, director of the Fair Elections Project and one of five citizens who came together in 2013 with the intention of filing a lawsuit and seeing a Supreme Court precedent set. "Now the moment is upon us where the high court will hear our argument and hopefully start returning our democracy to the people the way the founders intended."

“Every voter should have a say so that all of our voices are heard,” said Shauntay Nelson, program manager at Wisconsin Voices, one of the key groups organizing the Wisconsin Fair Maps Coalition. “Voters want maps that will represent the full volume of the voice of Wisconsin, not one with partial volume.”

“The people of Wisconsin want fair representation,” said Anna Dvorak, lead organizer for Citizen Action of Wisconsin and a key leader of the coalition. “They don’t want the party that happens to be in power to be able to rig the maps so they stay in power indefinitely. That’s not the Wisconsin way.”

“By creating an unprecedented number of “safe districts,” in which one party is assured victory, the current Wisconsin voting maps have caused a serious breakdown of bipartisanship in the state legislature,” said Andrea Kaminski, executive director of the Wisconsin League of Women Voters, a coalition member. “The Supreme Court should end partisan gerrymandering in order to give every citizen’s vote equal weight. Then politicians will have to win elections by winning over the hearts and minds of the people, as they should.”

“We believe the Whitford case is powerful and compelling,” said Nancy Kaplan of Grassroots Northshore, “but even the most favorable decision from the Supreme Court will not suffice on its own to secure fair election maps for the future. We still need new laws — or even a constitutional amendment — to ensure that we never again find our democracy sabotaged from within by those who so covet power that they would undermine the ability of the people to use their votes to hold elected officials accountable.”

The rally was followed by a reception in the church dining hall. Speakers included plaintiffs, key organizer Rep. Fred Kessler, and members of the Wisconsin Fair Maps Coalition, which includes the Fair Elections Project, Common Cause Wisconsin, Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, Citizen Action of Wisconsin, League of Women Voters of WI, Organizing for America, and Grassroots Northshore, the ACLU of Wisconsin, and other organizations.

More information about the lawsuit and campaign can be found at the Fair Elections Project website at fairelectionsproject.org, at [Facebook.com/wifairelections](https://www.facebook.com/wifairelections), and on Twitter at [@WIFairElections](https://twitter.com/WIFairElections) and [@FairElections](https://twitter.com/FairElections).