

Gary Hebl: Republican majority votes for 130th time to erode local control

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This past week, Republicans in the Assembly attempted to fast track Assembly Bill 109, a bill that would have negated town votes regarding the opting out of Dane County zoning ordinances. I voted against this bill because of the way that it was being rushed through the Assembly, with little to no consideration of what the local communities wanted. Instead, it was written for one town supervisor in Middleton who claimed to know better than his constituents.

The bill removes the option of voting at annual town meetings about whether or not to withdraw from Dane County zoning rules. Eight Dane County townships, including the Town of Sun Prairie, have a meeting scheduled for April 18 to discuss and vote on this issue. If the bill had passed last Tuesday and passed the Senate the following day, it would have upended the timetable that these communities had been working on for months.

Democrats in the legislature proposed a simple fix- if the bill passes, delay enforcement of the new law until June 1, 2017, to allow communities that had already scheduled votes to hold those before the bill takes effect. The amendment to the bill was defeated on a mostly party line vote.

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This is not what the people of Dane County want. We know this because the Middleton town supervisor who helped craft this bill lost his re-election bid to a write-in candidate because of his advocacy for and lobbying in favor of this bill. The people that were directly affected by the bill had a chance to speak at the ballot

box, and they rejected it.

The debate is not about whether towns in Dane County should be able to opt out of its zoning ordinances- that is already law. The argument is about the manner in which towns can vote on opting out. This bill simply makes no sense. It removes the option for allowing towns to vote on the opt out issue at their annual meetings- instead forcing towns to call special meetings to consider the issue, which means having to coordinate an additional meeting with the community, expending additional resources that towns may not want to do or be able to afford.

In the end, local communities should have the control to do what they find is best for them- if that means having a vote at an annual meeting, they should be allowed to do so. This is the 130th instance since Republicans took control of the legislature in 2010 that they have voted to erode local control. This is an unacceptable intrusion by the legislative majority. We have to be able to work with our local communities, and constantly telling them what they can and cannot do is not the way to accomplish that.

— Hebl, D-Sun Prairie represents the 46th Assembly District.